

LIMINAL

By
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This is a Safe Haven University novel that goes hand and hand with “Not Here,” “Not There,” “Not Anywhere,” and “Everywhere and all at Once.” There is a connection to all of the ‘I/Tulpa’ stories

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If you’re not familiar with my work, almost all of these stories are the product of a version of ‘active imagination’ in which the story is experienced and transcribed, more than labored over. If you are familiar with Tulpamancy, Wonderlands, or the stories of Tesla having such an overpowering imagination that he felt as if he went on long journeys to foreign lands and met people, without leaving his head... That is this. I can’t explain it better than he. I have put out some stories that felt more like ‘downloads’ but this is not that. I suspect this is similar to what Thomas Campbell, author of ‘My Big Theory of Everything’ is referring to when he discusses being able to shift realities. I don’t know. I just find it helpful, cathartic, in processing past traumas. This place, and the people there, have changed my world.

I assure you, there will be grammatical errors. I apologize in advance. I am working on doing better. I have marginally improved, which you only need read my first book made available in 2004. Feel free to email me any corrections or complaints. I am simply a modest fan of distant worlds, science, and metaphysics; someone who finds himself caught up in the whirlwinds of something bigger than himself on a daily basis.

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निर्मित

Chapter 1

Safe Haven University, a place where science, magic, and metaphysics can be studied in part or in whole. A place where the blending of the arts is encouraged. The school teaches both Light and Dark magic, as it is strongly held belief by the practitioners, professors, and experts in the matter that one cannot have one without the other. It is not the only University available for teaching esoteric knowledge and philosophies. It's not even the most recognized University. There are probably a half dozen Universities on the Astral plane alone offering similar curriculums. It is one of the few which is the most difficult to get in, because one only becomes a student by recommendation. Referrals go through an austere committee, and a process of debate and deliberations that is so involved that the US Congress might be more likely to pass a bill giving themselves a pay cut and increasing their hours to only do good deeds. Except on Tuesdays. They just flip a coin.

The University exist in multiple dimensions of space/time, but the physical manifestation is on an obscure, third density planet, orbiting an ordinary yellow star, in orbit around a black hole. The black hole itself churns out a harmonic, which the uninitiated might assume a condition of tinnitus; a color pervades all space time, like a tiny cork rippling the surface as fish nibble away at bait too large to consume. It's foothold in the physical blossoms upwards through the other realms of existence, and flourishes in the imaginal realm. On the physical plane, the planet is host to score of entities: physical beings, dimensional beings, and energy beings. There is a space station. There is one gas giant with forty moons and each of the moons offers a habitat for diverse population of creatures. Travel opportunities can be made by air cars, orbital space cars, the space elevator, boats, the sailing kind, the motored kinds, and the magical kinds, intra-solar spaceships, or magical portals. There are arguments they're aren't magical, just science, tech, and wormholes, but those arguments are best left to those who don't have access and aren't in school. Safe Haven students are taught not to engage in debates of what it is, and simply taught to use what works for them. You don't have to understand oxygen to enjoy a nice breath of fresh air. Not all magic works for all people the same way. This is also true of medicines. Not all medicines work the same. That's true of foods, as well. Some people can eat bacon without an increase in cholesterol. Some people can look at bacon and their cholesterol goes up. Magic? Well, placebos feel like magic, and it really irritates the pharmaceutical people to have to do triple blind studies to rule it out. Don't believe this, test it out for yourself. Next time your Doctor writes you a prescription, ask him: "what is the Number Needed to Treat?" It will either irritate the hell out of the Doctor, or severely impress him/her. NNT is a real thing. If a 1,000 people have to take the drug before one person realizes a benefit, you should seriously consider the list of side effects and whether you want to take it. Again, not magic, but it begs the question, why does science ignore findings from the anomalous side of the science when medicines have their statistical anomalies? Paranormal anomalies are occurring, significantly more than chance, and on a continuum not too far removed from drug efficacy measures! (This statement has not been endorsed by Safe Haven, but will be frequently spouted by students in a witch trial.) Jon posed in a class: so is there a 'number needed to do magic? Like 100,000,000 before one realizes oh, there is something here?' He did not get an answer. Yet.

Safe Haven faculty and students mostly use portals. Interstellar spaceships frequent the system. There is a hub of galactic trade. There is a hub for temporal trade. There is really no way to tell you where in space-time Safe Haven resides, because it is a well-kept secret. You may be brought there by people in the know, or you may find yourself mysteriously transported there, for no apparent rhyme and reason, and simply returned when your business is completed; or their business with you, as they have no qualms about kidnapping if it suits a porpoise, or even a purpose. If you find yourself there, it's most likely because someone there has taken an interest in you. There are no coincidences. It's as easy to get there as crossing from one room to another, and as hard to get there as putting a man safely on Mars using technology from the 14 hundreds. It can be done, but you really don't want to see that NNT number.

Jon Harister, a fairly new student, sometimes felt out of place as a fifty year old male in a school mostly comprised of young people, but that feeling didn't come from not being welcomed or treated well. Most people at Safe Haven were nice people. There are students and faculty that are not nice and you simply had to learn to avoid them. Or deal with them. Dealing with people at Safe Haven was akin to a fandango. You could consider that the dance or the foolish act or both. Sex was usually involved. That's another thing about Safe Haven folks: most people at Safe Haven have an incredibly high libido, higher than average, and so statistically, young people were more prevalent. People with past trauma, bipolar, boundary issues, and or schizophrenia were more likely to be students because, quite frankly, they had access to things the average person couldn't. If you love sex, would have sex indiscriminately, on demand, only needing a willing, breathing partner, or even one not breathing, you're probably in the running to be a student at SHU.

Jon was privy to a conversation about the apparent disparity of younger males to older males, to which he was quickly educated: "Most men are not established enough to engage in education and magic till they have achieved a good many years. If you want a stable, patient, kind father for your offspring, one should always choose an older male. Magic and children are similar animals. You have to nurture both to get good results. Women always mature faster than men. Statistically, physically, mentally, emotionally, magically, and spiritually."

One does not have to reside on Safe Haven to be summoned to class. One cannot avoid class, any more than the Lewis children could escape going to Narnia if they were so summoned. (If you assume the Lewis children were not real children, you're not likely to be a candidate for Safe Haven.) Trying to go to class before your class was ready though just added more school work to your plate. By the time a student was a sophomore, they usually had given up trying to rush through their studies. One simply had to realize the Universe had its own schedule and was usually completely indifferent to your own. Jon was not on Safe Haven when he was called to class, but was comfortably passing the time at his personal home away from home, "2nd Home," for lack of creativity. He was simply passing from one room to another. All thresholds are portals. All portals go somewhere. You only think each room in your house is connected in an integral way because you have not been a Student of Safe Haven. You only think 'rooms' exist only in a house, but outside is a room. A really big room. Day and night time are rooms, and there are a million billion rooms in between this, and you can stand as still as a tree and still travel between rooms. If you hadn't notice this, it's okay. Few people do. Most people don't notice when they've exited or entered a room. Most people have an underdeveloped sense of

ambiance. Even some of the graduates of Safe Haven haven't made the connection. You're given this not to make you feel bad, but to practice paying attention. Sometimes, if you fail to notice, you return to where you were.

Jon was captured, or given a 'pass,' as he crossed over the threshold leading from his bedroom to living area. He had taken two steps before he realized he had transitioned beyond where he had expected to arrive. He took one step back, but did not go back to where he was previously. He wondered if he was still there, and suspected he was, but would have to contend with what was before him before he could return to where he was previously. We could spend the rest of eternity debating if we ever return to where were previously. He had done this enough now to know holding his breath usually helped the vertigo to fade, and helped him contend. One eventually had to breathe, to accept. He began reading the ambiance of the room, and it was highly charged with expectation. For better or worse, he held everyone's attention. He chewed on his lips as he processed what he should be doing. He was in a classroom, consisting of a teacher's desk and chair, and fifteen student desks and chairs. There were fourteen students in their places. There was one unoccupied chair, clearly his. It was on the far side of the room to where he was now. There was a man sitting on the edge of the teacher's desk, who Jon immediately recognized.

The man, an elderly Chinese male, thin, traditional, long white beard and mustache, wearing blue jeans, a t-shirt, and a sport's coat, with off colored elbow patches. He drummed a cane on the floor.

"You're late," Lester said.

"You're the professor?" Jon asked.

"No, I am the assistant Professor, and you're wasting our time," Lester said.

Jon took the remaining seat. From his seat, the change in perspective allowed Jon to identify another feature of the room. There was a small, ordinary goldfish bowl on the other side of Lester. A single goldfish hovered leisurely, facing away from the class at an oblique angle. There were rainbow rocks at the bottom of the tank, and a tiny castle with an arch just big enough to allow the fish to retreat if it so chose. A solitary leaf of a plant to the right of the abode.

"I assume all of you know why you're here," Lester said.

"I don't," Jon said.

"Have you lost all sense of etiquette?" Lester asked.

"I don't understand," Jon said.

"Students, what do we do when we want to be addressed or ask a question?" Lester asked.

Six students raised their hands, eager to answer the question. The others likely didn't want to be recognized.

"You can't be serious," Jon said.

"Jon, I am not going to give you special treatment because we are friends and you live with me," Lester said.

"I live with you?" Jon asked.

"That's what I said," Lester said.

"You, Sir, live with me," Jon asked.

“When I found you, you were nothing more than a homeless, guttersnipe, begging for a place to live and food to eat. My friends and I took you in, out of our extraordinary kindness, in part due to your extraordinary pathetic state. And how did you repay our kindness? You fucked my friends, destroyed our home, got us kicked off campus, and so, though technically we may be residing at your place, you, Sir, are living with us, and by default, with me,” Lester said.

Jon was going to point out the flaws to Lester’s history, but Lester continued, so Jon sat quietly while Lester was ignoring him and talking on as if he weren’t there.

“Let’s begin with the class rules,” Lester said. “Rule number one: there will be no sex while in this class. Rule two...”

Jon raised his hands. Lester leaned his cane to and fro as if he were shifting gear.

“Jon?”

“You mean, here, in the classroom?” Jon asked.

“While you’re in the class,” Lester said.

“You mean, no sex while enrolled in the class, or while here in the classroom?” Jon asked.

“No sex while in the class,” Lester said.

“Is this a hard fast rule?” Jon asked.

“It’s not hard. Don’t have sex,” Lester said.

“What about oral sex?” Jon asked.

“What about oral sex?” Lester asked.

“Is that permitted?” Jon asked.

“Oral sex, by definition is sex. Rule one states, no sex while in this class,” Lester said.

“What about giving oral?” Jon asked.

“You want to give me oral sex?” Lester asked.

“No!” Jon said. “But I might want to engage in oral sex...”

“You want me to give you oral sex?” Lester asked.

“No!” Jon said.

“So, we’re in agreement, no sex, what’s the problem?” Lester asked.

“There is no way in hell I am going the whole semester without sex,” Jon said.

“I didn’t say you had to go the whole semester without sex,” Lester said.

“You said no sex while in this class,” Jon said.

“Yes,” Lester said.

“So, is that the whole semester, or just in this classroom?” Jon asked.

“Yes,” Lester said.

“How long is this class?” Jon demanded.

“Depends on how many questions you ask,” Lester said.

“What happens if I have sex?” Jon asked.

“What normally happens when you have sex?” Lester asked.

“I meant, if I violate rule one, what is the consequence?” Jon asked.

“You will die,” Lester said.

“Seriously?!” Jon asked.

“Surely you have gone without sex before,” the girl sitting next to him said. Jon stared dumbly at her. She observed his look and decided it was compulsory to explain her position: “We all went the first twenty two years of our lives not having sex. You can go a spell without.”

“You clearly don’t know me,” Jon said. He also nearly said, ‘and don’t call me surely.’ He turned to Lester. “Can we at least masturbate?”

“No,” Lester said.

“How do I get out of this class?!” Jon said.

“By completing the class,” Lester said. “Rule Two, if a Freshman approaches you to get their sex card punched, you will not only turn them down, but that student is forever on your do not fuck list, even after you get out of this class.”

“That is so un-fucking-reasonable,” Jon said.

“Raise your hand, please,” Lester said.

Jon raised his hand.

“Jon,” Lester said.

“That is...”

“Rule two,” Lester said. “Rule three, you cannot blame this class or me for not being able to engage in sex.”

“And just what excuse am I supposed to give?” Jon asked.

“Lie,” Lester said.

“To Loxy?!” Jon asked. “You know I can’t lie to her. And if a Freshman asks you for sex, you have to engage them. It’s the University’s rule.”

“Unless you’re in this class, then rule two trumps the general rule that you should have sex with whomever asks, whenever they ask. The Freshman must be so thoroughly discouraged by your excuse that they will intentionally avoid you for all time,” Lester said.

Jon got up and tried to leave the class. The door didn’t open.

“Jon, please return to your seat,” Lester said.

“Or what, you will kick me out?” Jon asked.

Lester smiled. It was creepy. “Oh, please challenge me in my class,” he said.

Jon considered the situation. Lester was pretty handy with the cane. The dance number with Dick Van Dyke and the old bamboo, well, that’s child’s play compared to Lester’s martial arts ability with a cane. Jon returned to his seat.

Lester continued with the rules. Jon was so busy sulking, he didn’t hear any of the other rules, nor did he hear the class dismissed. He only saw people getting up to leave and he got up to leave, too.

“Jon, I need you stay,” Lester said.

“Oh, fuck you,” Jon said.

“Refer to rule one and sit. The professor wants to speak with you,” Lester said.

Jon sat back down. Lester was the last person to depart the room. He closed the door behind him. Jon sat there, waiting for the professor to come speak with him. To the fish he said, ‘I know a game we can play; it’s called up up up with the fish.’ The fish didn’t laugh. “Oh, come on, it was funny. Doctor Seuss? Oh, maybe Loxy is right, I am not funny.” He put his head on the desk.

When sleep didn't come, he got up and tried to open the door. It didn't open. He walked around the room, but there was no other exit and no windows. Only the chairs, the desks, and the goldfish. Jon opened all the drawers on the teacher's desk. He found goldfish food and dry erase markers. Jon ranted, "I hate fucking dry-erase markers. Doesn't the school know chalk is cheaper? I can buy a box of non-allergenic chalk for fifty cents that lasts me five years, but a single dry-erase marker rarely lasts beyond a week and cost like five bucks a piece..." He tried to open the drawers on the student desk, but none would open for him, except the drawers on his desk, and they were empty. He sat back down. He leaned his head on his desk. He stared at the goldfish. The goldfish stared back. Its mouth made the slow opening and closings as it pushed water through its gills. It pooped. Everybody poops. Jon went through that childhood story. Elephants poop, and they need a huge kitty litter box. Goldfish poop, too. He wondered if dolphins made fart jokes. Maybe that's why the pod was always jumping out of the water and laughing. Did stragglers get hit with poop?

Jon struggled to avoid going into daydream mode. He had flashbacks to the movie "3 O'clock High," and a clock montage. He found himself entertaining a montage of the goldfish and him holding a staring contest with the camera getting closer and closer to the goldfish with dramatic music, ending with Ferris Bueller jokes. He wondered if Stan Lee would join him for a cameo and coffee. Finally, Jon's eyes started to close from boredom and just as he was about to sleep, he heard the voice:

"You're making this difficult."

Jon became alert, looking around for the professor. "Hello?" His mind was as quiet as the classroom. It was like being in an empty house and hearing a creak and suddenly even your breath stopped so you could hear the echo of what was, but you're not a bat, and you can't chase echoes, and eventually you have to breathe again. No one was there. He got up and tried the door. Locked. He looked for a camera or a speaker but found none. "Hello?"

No one answered. He stood there for a while, until he got bored of standing, returned to his chair, and again, his eyes began to shut.

"Jon," came the voice.

Jon sat back up. He was seriously attentive.

"That's better," the voice said.

Jon blinked. He pointed at the goldfish. "You're the professor?"

"My name is Frito," it said. The voice was booming, inside Jon's head.

"That's funny," Jon said.

"I was named by a child on Earth," Frito said. "It stuck. Just like your call sign 'Strangelove,' is going to stick."

"My call sign?" Jon said.

"You didn't think you'd be solarchariot, did you? Your group call sign is solarchariot, but you, Sir, are Strangelove," Frito said.

"Speaking of love of strange, I am opposed to the class rule..."

"Suck it up," Frito said.

"Wouldn't that be breaking the rule?" Jon asked.

"Not everything is an innuendo," Frito said.

"Has anyone told you that you sound like Samuel?" Jon asked.

“Expecting Morgan Freeman?” Frito asked.

“Yes, actually,” Jon said.

“I am not God. I am a goldfish,” Frito said. “And I chose the voice I thought you would most likely respond to...”

“I would have responded better to Lauren Bacall,” Jon interrupted.

“No, you would have just been distracted by sex. There is more to life than sex,” Frito said.

Jon bit his lower lip. “May I be released from your class?”

“No,” Frito said. “You have been chosen to be a Guardian of Doors. This class is designed to expand your liminal nature to the next level.”

Jon didn’t say anything.

“What part of that don’t you understand?” Frito asked.

“I don’t know enough to even ask,” Jon said.

“Fair enough,” Frito said. He began to pace back and forth as he lectured. “You, Sir, are a generalist. Most worlds hate generalists. They prefer specialists. Worlds steeped in industrial economic paradigms, they are even more loathed to generalists than other economic models. The more generalists a society has, the rarer the call for specialists. Even your world’s primary dating philosophy is to seek specialists, one partner who can meet all needs, which is a better explanation for the obsessiveness of one ring to rule them all, and why you personally suck at monogamy. You’re not a specialist. You’re a generalist. You irritate the majority of folks. They see you as useless, unfaithful, undisciplined, reckless, unfocused, flighty...”

“I got you,” Jon said.

“You are severely lucky to have avoided the diagnosis of ADHD and been placed on narcotics,” Frito said.

“Oh, I got the diagnosis,” Jon said. “But my mother used the prescription for herself.”

“There you go,” Frito said.

“What does this have to with me and your class and no sex?” Jon asked.

“Everyone is a generalist,” Frito said.

“But...”

“I said everyone wants specialists. They are even trained to believe they are specialist and they get really perturbed when they have to go outside of their domain just to function. Interestingly, if they wander out of their domain on their own accord and get called out, they will say, ‘trust me, I am specialist,’ which just confuses the matter. People are punished if they don’t specialize, and even if they do, they can still be punished because there is always something they should know, either by society or other specialist who expect others to know enough to hold a conversation with them, but get irritated when you actually do know a smidgeon of the special lore, but the truth is, everyone’s true nature is to be a generalist,” Frito said. “As a Guardian, your job is to help build bridges between worlds.”

“You’re speaking metaphorically connecting people to other aspects of their nature, or literally connecting them to other worlds?” Jon asked.

“I don’t make a distinction between the two paradigms you just espoused,” Frito said.

Jon rubbed his forehead.

“How many people do you have in your head?” Frito asked.

“Me and Loxy,” Jon said.

“Just the two of you?” Frito asked, skeptically.

“Just the two of us,” Jon said. “We can make it if we try...”

“Damn you! I will have that song in my head all night, thank you very much,” Frito said.

“Jon, you have seriously underestimated the number of personalities in your head.”

“How do you reckon? There is me. There is Loxy, my tulpa induced through a mind meld with the actual Loxy,” Jon said.

“Well, for starters, there is every age of you still residing with-in you,” Frito said.

“Oh, you mean like, that gestalt therapy where you have to heal and integrate your inner child?” Jon said.

“We don’t integrate. We increase coherency and cooperation,” Frito said. “Every age of you still exists in you. There are other tangential yous inside of you, people you could have become but chose not to, and people you aspired to be but didn’t become, and all the in between fantasies of you. Speaking of which, there is no way in hell anyone could produce your version of Buck Rogers. And then there are all the personalities of the people you know, they reside in you, that includes their actual personalities, and your perceived variation of their personalities. There are personalities inside you that you have never met. There are personalities you have only met within dreams.”

“NPCs,” Jon said.

“No! They are full personalities, autonomous, sentient,” Frito said.

“You’re saying I have multiple personality complex?” Jon said.

“DID,” Frito corrected.

“I did have multiple personality...”

“It’s called Dissociative Identity Disorder. Medical people didn’t want to give credence to the multiples or plurals so they change the diagnosis for their own comfort level, but the thing is, it’s not a disorder. Everyone has an Id. Everyone is an entity. Everyone has a super Id and a lesser Id, and plethora of others aspects and super aspects, and archetypes, and hats, and functions, and in short, identities. Your subconscious is a personality, a distinct, super personality which is always present and working in gestalt with you. You are not your subconscious personality. But your subconscious personality isn’t you, either.”

“I don’t think I am smart enough to be a student at Safe Haven,” Jon said.

“It’s not about smarts. The one thing all of your inner personalities have in common is your subconscious. You are the identified dream character that has been designated lead personality, but you are not in charge. At least, not as much as you think you are. Your personality is the goldfish in the bowl. Your subconscious is the water and the bowl,” Frito said. “There is a bigger consciousness in which your subconscious resides, but at the end of this regression, there is only consciousness. All is consciousness. All is one. News flash: you are not the student. Your soul is. You are the avatar accessing the lesson.”

“OMG, you are not Samuel. You’re Mace Windu,” Jon said. Because he led with joke, he missed how big Frito’s last statement was. “And you’re pushing your theory that we’re all one in the Force, but I am too old to start the training.”

“I thought you would prefer that to Carl Jung’s collective unconscious,” Frito said.

“I love Carl,” Jon said. “And I love Morgan.”

“Morgan is going to be harder to connect with due to the social cock blocking he is receiving,” Samuel said.

“Yeah, I am not happy about that. Maybe he is a little aggressive and persistent, but he’s not like raping people or drugging people, and if he expresses interest in you and you say no, then he just moves on,” Jon said. “But even if he was a complete ass, his work is still good. You can’t identify the characters he plays as him. And who the hell doesn’t have a dark side. And you can’t punish his work without punishing everyone who contributed to the work, because no one works alone. Like Cosby. His actions were horrendous, but his work was solid and good, and it was a team effort, and now the Cosby show is forever lost to people, and the people who participated in that have been equally blocked...”

“You compartmentalize well,” Frito said. “That’s the generalist. Iteration; most people are trained to be specialist. It took generalists to make the Cosby show, but it required a specialist to ‘make’ the show, and the specialist was taken down, his work goes with him. Most people are trained to be reductionists. They can’t see that it affects us all, not just the one. Most people are only able to see black and white. Yeah, fifty shades of gray was a hit, but not because of the content, but because of the title and the fact people know there is some truth hidden in the title and they were hopeful of finding enlightenment in the movie, and for some, it opened the doors to the possibility there may be some other worlds, some other colors even, but few found the ultimate answers. Most can’t make the leap you just did. They can only see Cosby was evil, therefore all his work is evil. No more picture pages pictures pages, time to get your crayons or your pencil. The crusade against Cosby was part of a wave that caught Morgan. This was not a crusade against all bad. There is more than enough evidence that Edison was not a good man; he stole from others, and he didn’t create the light bulb, whereas Tesla was a great man, but he was crushed by Edison’s slander, even as Edison was publicly executing elephants and stealing his work and suppressing it. Is anyone rushing to change history? No.”

“There is a movement to rewrite history,” Jon said.

“Of course there is. Written history is always skewed. It’s full of inaccuracies. Unfortunately, even the original history is as wrong as the rewrites. So is your personal history and everyone’s personal history, so why would written history be solid gold? That doesn’t mean it’s a lie. It doesn’t mean you shouldn’t write it down. Your older self may have better perspective and when it revisits the younger self’s perceptions of reality, it might have clarity. It doesn’t mean you can’t find truth. It’s like taking a photograph. You catch a moment and you assume trajectories of every object, but you will never know a hundred percent what brought all the elements together for that photon while being that photo, and you will never know the thoughts and the emotions...” Frito stopped. “You have to get out of the picture. You got to get out of yourself. Which is why you’re in my class. You need a new paradigm.”

“I don’t understand,” Jon said.

“You cannot continue to function under your old paradigm,” Frito said. “Your old paradigm served you well for the first part of your life, but now you must let go of the truths you clung to in order to greet the truths that will take you the rest of the way home. You need new models. Your old models were good enough, they kept you alive they got you here. They will not get you the rest of the way. You can learn from academic books. You can learn from fiction, because is also a model. ‘Good Will Hunting’ is a great movie for people with past abuse. Lots

of people get better in that movie. 'Death Wish Three' is not a viable option for long term health. Choose your models wisely."

"How do you let go of past truths?"

"Peacefully, with acceptance that no one was trying to take advantage of you with lies. If you hold an emotional attachment or belief, such as bitterness for being stuck in the lie, then you're still in the old paradigm. You have to let go completely. No more watching news. No more following politics. No more emotional investment in the game that you know is not the real game. Your previous game was 'chutes and ladders.' You're now playing 'go,' Frito said.

"Interesting. You're proposing that I am now playing a game with black and white pieces, when I am supposedly moving into shades of gray," Jon said.

"Okay, so, you're playing 'super go,' and the pieces are translucent, luminescent, rainbow colors," Frito said.

"Interesting," Jon said. "If all the pieces are equally colorful, how do I discern between my pieces and the opponent's pieces?"

"That's the trick," Frito said. "When you figure that out, let me know. Now, go."

"Go, or super go," Jon said.

"Just go," Frito said. "And be nice to Lester."

"Seriously?! I want out of this class," Jon said.

"Complete the course," Frito said.

"Can you change your voice to sound like Laurence Fishburne?" Jon asked.

"What, not oracle enough for you?"

"How about Omar Epps?" Jon asked.

"I chose the voice that best represents the entirety of me," Frito said.

"Can we change your name?" Jon asked.

"To the incredible Mr. Limpet?" Frito asked. Jon could be seen through the bowl weighing that. "No."

Jon got up and headed for the door. He paused.

"No," Frito said.

"But you chose your voice, so like, it has meaning and ramifications beyond the fact it fits you?" Jon asked. "Am I a Jedi?!"

"No," Frito said.

"Are you friends with Jon Travolta?" Jon asked.

"Do you want me to drop you into a fiction and beat you to a pulp?" Frito asked.

"No. I would like to know what the shiny thing was," Jon said.

"When you're ready, you will know," Frito said. "Good day, Mr. Harister."

Chapter 2

On the leaving the classroom, Jon found himself suddenly at the Campus square, near the fountain. The campus was busier than usual. Kiosks were everywhere, offering anything from portal coordinates to magical credit, which could adjust to any currency on any planet that used material bartering. Magical credit was interesting thing, more enchanting than regular credit, more coveted than bit coins, more attractive than a pirate chest full of D&D dice, with too high an interest, and no way out of paying it back; only freshman would get themselves so entangled. There were food kiosks and game kiosks and 'quest' kiosks; Jon paused at a lineup of 'kissing booths,' a kissing booth and a 'more than' kissing booth, and a variety of options including male, female, young, old, teeth or no, blonds, redheads, mermaids, puppies, mechanical tech, neuro tech, a sloth-which was usually a tease, and a donkey dancing and singing 'pick me, pick me.' Tarot readers and psychics and madrigal singers who suddenly struck a chord singing 'AHHHH' as if angels had just orgasmed light into existence, and probably subliminally connected to the puppy licking a face. That, or they were harmonizing with the 'more than' kissing booth; it was bigger on the inside. Jon made his way to the nearest portal to jump home, keeping his eyes low, trying to not make eye contact with people. He saw legs coming at him; they were probably just walking legs, but they had a provocative rhythm and it was clear the legs likely belonged to a group of Robert Palmer girls, and he didn't feel like fighting with Robert today, so he turned to avoid the women. As he turned away, he called himself a coward and to lower his negative self-response, he imagined they were actually guys, female bodies with Robert Palmer faces. He turned and walked into a pair of breasts. He backed up, and was still eye to eye with breasts. He felt fingers on his chin drawing him up out of cleavage, to a neck, and a Disney face with hair that seem like shellacked hair. If Emma Watson was an 8 foot giant, merged with Jennifer Love Hewit, this might have been her twin. He wasn't sure if she was smiling or calculating her response.

"Sorry," Jon said. 'Magic,' he thought. 'This is magic. She's manipulating you.' 'Manipulating' wasn't a negative word, just a recognition of magical, advertising influential qualities that were radiating outwards, energizing regions of his brain that lowered inhibition while simultaneously resulting in a testosterone dump.

"Sign up for credit, and I'll let you do more than run into them," she said.

"Ummm, no," Jon said, excusing himself hastily. He hurried off to the corner of the square with the coffee shop, a place he had frequented since his first days, and a place he felt reasonably safe enough to bring his energy down a little. He acquired a table just as a couple were departing it. He didn't mind that the table hadn't been bussed. He didn't even mind the partially eaten pizza slice. It was nice a tide over piece that made him want more. A young lady came to bus the table, not making comment about the fact he was eating after someone. She didn't even make a face. The female made eye contact, his esteem suddenly improved in her eye.

"I was so going to eat that," she said. "Thank you for saving my hips."

"Yeah, well, mine are doomed. Older men either get sex or gain weight," Jon said.

"Want me to help you maintain your weight?" she asked.

"It will take more than one romp to burn off this half slice," Jon said.

“I’m good for more than one,” she said. Her smile was atrocious, both teeth placement and smell. And on any other day, he would have still kissed her.

“I have an STD,” Jon lied.

“Oh, so do I!” she said.

“Um, I lied, I don’t have an STD,” Jon said.

“Want one?” she asked.

“Not today, but thank you so much,” Jon said. “That table over there needs you.”

She nodded, not offended at all, and ran off to bus another table. Jon sighed; except for her face, the rest of her fell out just fine. Even a Hollywood makeover wouldn’t fix her face, but Jon thought, this was most people, this was real, you should love real people. Real people are flawed. Fake people are really flawed.

Sabra, dressed in a wench’s costume that was too tight with buttons at risk of being projectiles, arrived to take his order. She kissed him. “Hey!”

“Hey!” Jon said. “Darkest dark chocolate you have, stat.”

Sabra pulled a bar from her pocket and handed it to him. He hurriedly peeled it and took too big a bite.

“Hey hey hey, easy,” Sabra said. “One square, melted on the tongue will last a day…”

He stopped chewing, closed his eyes, and waited for the relief. Supposedly cocoa triggered the same parts of the brain resulting in the same peaceful state that an orgasm would unlock. He preferred the orgasm. He returned to the present, folded the remaining chocolate back in its foil, and pocketed it.

“You okay?” Sabra asked.

“I will be. I thought you were working exclusively at the Harister Hall’s coffee shop.”

“I am filling in for a friend who needed off,” Sabra said. “You look like you need to get off.”

“Off this planet,” Jon said.

“Oh, rough day at school? Want a quickie?” Sabra asked.

“Um, if you’re referring to a quick cup of Joe, absolutely,” Jon said. “Chocolate blend.”

“Wow,” Sabra said. “Did you just block?”

“No,” Jon said. “I would never do that.”

“You just blocked,” Sabra said.

“No,” Jon said.

“Flirt back with me, then,” Sabra said.

“Would flirting result in follow through?” Jon asked.

Sabra leaned in, tangles of hair falling forwards. “With you, anytime, anywhere.”

“I really want that coffee, extra bitterly chocolate,” Jon said.

“Are you alright? Do I need to call Loxy?” Sabra said.

“No, just a coffee. I am just sorting some stuff and can’t provide you the full attention that you deserve,” Jon said.

Sabra was skeptical of the partial compliment. “Jon, even five percent of your attention is worth it. You’re like concentrate,” Sabra said.

“You’re persistent today,” Jon said.

“I am horny. I have been watching students hook up all day. And that damn everything booth, ‘We’re all going to die and I have never been with a man before,’ that line never gets old,” Sabra said. She looked around the campus. “And I swear, if that credit rep gets any more action I may become a rep! It must be freshman card stamping semester.”

“No one’s hit on you?” Jon asked.

Sabra sat down and began to cry. “What’s wrong with me?! Even you are turning me down.”

Jon’s first impulse was to hug her. He froze, bit his tongue, and waited. She stopped. She batted her eye lids. “Not working,” Jon said.

“I am so calling Loxy,” Sabra said, suddenly tearless.

“Just bring me a coffee,” Jon said.

Sabra stood, befuddled. She didn’t bring up the fact that they, as well as his entire commune, had a general pact that no one got denied; if they had an urge, and they wanted help satisfying it, they would get play, or they would help find someone to play. Not feeling well was not a guaranteed out. Still, she put the back of her palm against his forehead to assess temperature. Frowned, then nodded. “Okay. But you are so going to make this up to me.” She departed to get his coffee, stopping to respond to a patron.

Jon diverted his eyes from her departing thighs to the table. He didn’t recall the tables being made of iron. The metal was weaved together into a black spaghetti, Celtic mesh, and if you tracked it, which in itself was not a simple task, the table itself seemed to reflect the Universe at large. The flat fabric of space with the inner portion sinking into a central black hole that in many ways resembled the map of entangled neurons descending down the spine. The Universe wasn’t expanding; it was being flushed down the toilet of life. He wondered if he ran a marble across the table it would come back to him, or go down the drain like the coin vacuum at the mall. A voice drew him up from the table.

“Excuse me, but aren’t you Jon Harister?”

If you’ve seen the Matrix, and you remember the scene where Neo is distracted by the girl in the red dress, you have an inkling of the vision that stood in front of Jon. She had legs up to here; Jon’s mouth fell right there. Jon found himself standing, extending a hand, a ‘Don Knots’ hand in the shakiest gun in the west, incapable of speech, clearly nervous sort of hand shake. Her hair was light and layered, almost friskily feathery like Farah Faucet in Logan’s Run. Also, like that character, she had an innocence about her, with sparkling eyes and an aura. Her doey doe eyes were not innocent. She made Jessica rabbit seem like the flying nun; you still wanted to tap the nun, but you had to pay homage, too.

He cleared his throat. “Um, yes...”

She accepted his hand and pulled him in closer to her. “I have heard so much about you.”

The statement had enough ambiguity about it that it impacted her hold over him and his brain clicked forwards. “Oh?” He let go of her hand and invited her to sit. She didn’t. She showed him her sex card. Her primary image was set, a feminized and attractive bottle, smoke rising and taking feminine form. “You’re a jinn?”

“A freshman, and I want you to be the first to sign onto my sex card,” she said.

“Damn it,” Jon cursed under his breath.

“What?” she asked.

“I am sorry, but I am allergic to blonds,” Jon said.

“Oh? I am really a red head,” she said, and her hair changed and one of her blue eyes became green. It was peculiar enough he wanted to go deeper into her gaze. Her hair fluoresced like flames, orange, red, and yellow lights pushed through fiber optic hair, and he wanted to run his fingers through it, even though his fingers were likely to be singed, all the while being on top of her in a darkened room. She could have gone sang a chorus of ‘I am misses heat miser, I am miss sun,’ and he would have still gone sun diving.

“I am sorry, but I am presently unstable and your jinni energy could cause me to combust,” Jon said.

“Oh, I assure you, I can contain your combustion within me,” she said. “I’m Tippy, by the way.”

“Yeah, you probably shouldn’t be drinking until your card is fully punched,” Jon said.

Tippy laughed. “No, my name is Tippy,” she said. “By the way, I am a virgin.”

“Oh, well, that’s too bad, I am not into virgins,” Jon said.

“You could be,” Tippy said.

“Seriously, virgins are overrated, and problematic. Come back when you have some experience,” Jon said.

Sabra arrived with a coffee and a smirk. “So, you just needed some strange?”

“No,” Jon said.

“Oh! Is Sabra part of your entourage?” Tippy asked.

“Yes,” Sabra said even as Jon was saying ‘No,’ which irked Sabra into saying ‘what?’ and he quickly corrected.

“Oh, everyone knows you’re poly, Jon. You don’t have to hide your nature from me,” Tippy said.

“Yeah, Jon. Are you that befuddled?” Sabra asked.

“I am not befuddled,” Jon stammered.

“So why are you turning me down?” Tippy asked.

“Seriously?” Sabra asked. “He said no?”

“He didn’t say no as much as he gave me seriously lame excuses as to why he can’t,” Tippy said.

“Jon,” Sabra said. “What the hell is going on with you?”

Jon took his coffee and sat down. “I am tired, I am grumpy, and I want my coffee,” Jon said. There were clouds in his coffee. He frowned into it, and drank it anyway.

Sabra and Tippy sat down.

“Seriously, do I have to be like brutal to make you walk away?” Jon asked.

“Do you want to be brutal?” Tippy asked. It was definitely a flirt.

“No. I’m telling you I am not interested, I will never be interested, go away,” Jon said.

“I am really confused. You don’t like me?” Tippy asked. “You’re disgusted by me so much you won’t even fuck me once just to punch my card?”

“Jon! If she asked you to punch her card you have to engage her,” Sabra said.

“I don’t want to get engaged,” Jon said.

“Marry me?” Tippy said.

“Without an engagement?” Jon asked.

“I don’t want a long drawn out engagement,” Topsy said. “How about a quickie on the table?”

“Jon, remember when you were a freshman? Imagine if no one had said yes how frustrating that would have been...” Sabra said.

“I am still a freshman! I am stuck at this stage of life,” Jon said.

“Did you just snap at me? Are you under a spell?” Sabra asked. “You’ve been carded. You have to do her. It’s a compulsory class rule.”

“Except on Tuesdays,” Jon said.

“It’s Thursday,” Sabra and Topsy said.

“On my planet, it’s always Tuesdays,” Jon said. “The laws of physics are different there.”

“I am a Jinn. I can change my appearance and smell and taste,” Topsy said.

“Really?” Sabra said.

Jon bit his lip, nearly echoing Sabra in unison...

“Yeah,” Topsy said.

Topsy demonstrated by changing her appearance. It was like a television image flickering, a candle flickering... When her image became steady again, she was a human of indeterminate race, probably a mixture of races, dread locks, and tie dye fashion. The colors were subdued pastels, swirling like a gas giant’s surface cloud cover. It was shoulder-less, the arm holes bigger than they needed to be and hung lower than they need to, revealing more than just side boobs, was tied in the back, and may have been a just a t-shirt and not a dress, hanging just low enough to give you a view of solid thighs, but not riding high enough to know if she was wearing anything else. It was creeping up enough there was hope one would discover ‘yes or no’ calling for lingering eyes. She twirled, showing off, and sat back down.

“Still not interested,” Jon lied.

“Seriously?” Topsy asked, scooting her chair closer so she could touch his knee. Her hand didn’t stay on his knee. “I have evidence to the contrary.”

“You can’t form a conclusion based on that evidence alone,” Jon said. “The wind is blowing Sabras essence in my face. No is no.” Sabra smiled a huge smile at him. He was thinking, ‘OMG, how do I get out of this?!’ It occurred to him, though he didn’t consider her out of line, in his world of origin had he been equally aggressive he would have been the bad guy. If he had touched her and said she was wet, she wanted it- that would have been a crime. If he had touched her and she had responded by hitting him, she would be socially justified in pummeling him. Even if everyone agreed she was being too aggressive, in no world would he be allowed to hit her. In no world could he run away, or disengage, without incurring disparaging labels. This was a public place and the social rules were not the same as origin. There was a lot more socially permissible touching going on at Safe Haven. Public sex was permitted on campus. Watching was encouraged.

“May I have a rain check?” Topsy asked.

“No. My ‘no’ for you is indefinite, for all of time, even if we were the last two sentient beings in the whole universe,” Jon said. With her ability to shape shift, he wondered how he would ever be able to enforce his ‘no.’ He would eventually have sex again. She could easily trick him, and because he was actually wanting her, he could suspect it was her and still fuck her willingly under plausible deniability. In his mind, he had a short hallucination of her being the

Wicked Witch of the West: 'I'll get you my pretty. And your little sperms, too.' Just thinking of that aroused him further, probably because of his past, which also explained why he liked the POV porn where the female had either drugged the male, used a magic spell, threat of force, or had snuck into the room and was silently raping him even next to a sleeping partner. Quite frankly, if Topsy had used her power to steal him away and force the issue, he'd continue to resist even while enjoying the experience. He shook his head, trying to find ways not to be aroused. "Please. Go away."

Topsy stood. She seemed confused, on the verge of tears, and then she disappeared in twirling of light and smoke and mirror flashes. Jon sighed relief.

"What is wrong with you?" Sabra asked.

"What? I am not allowed to say 'no'?" Jon asked.

"You're allowed," Sabra said. "I just never imagined you turning down sex. And that was like super-hot."

"I know," he said, bringing the remaining chocolate out of his pocket. "This is not going to be enough."

निर्मित

On passing through a portal, Jon found himself in a room before a committee. The panel sat at a curved desk. There was one chair in front at the focal point of the curved desk. Jon looked back for the exit, none was present. The room itself was circular. He had intended to go home, not here. He had never been here before. He scratched his head.

"Have a seat, Mr. Harister." This was the voice of Frito. He was in the center position. To Frito's right, were three females, and to his left, three males. Two were humans, male and female. The other four were not human. He recognized one: Summer, his intern supervisor. Summer was a Reptilian; she was not an alien. Her species had evolved on Earth, alongside the dinosaurs. She had more right to Earth than he did.

"I did not have sex with that woman," Jon said.

For a moment he thought he saw Samuel Jackson mirrored in the Goldfish bowl, removing glasses and looking all skeptically cynical, and angry: "sit down, Sir."

'Fuck, what did I do now?' Jon thought. He sat down.

The male at the end, a tall humanoid, bleached-white hair, long, thin eyes, like Asian eyes only more of a caricature, so much so it seemed unreal, met his gaze. On meeting his eyes, Jon found he wanted to run away; a huge fear response washed over him, so much so he couldn't move. There was a lesser impulse to grow closer, because he wanted to find the flaw in the face; he wanted to peel off the mask and know who the person was beneath. The man's lips were short, but they moved normally. Lip reading didn't match the sounds Jon heard.

"I am Rauth," he said. "Tell me what you know of the Confederation?"

Jon considered how to answer. "You want me to speculate, based on my years of experience with conspiracy theories from Earth?"

"Answer the question," Frito said.

“I know nothing,” Jon said. “Even if I did know something, I don’t think I would know that I know due to the amount of disinformation, misinformation, rumors, lies, contradictions, and simply a lack of direct, firsthand knowledge.”

“I am Teriture,” the female next to Frito introduced herself. She was feminine in appearance, hyper feminine, as if crafted from white marble. She had a faceless face, no hair, and there was a surface gleam, as if she were an anime heroine, as well as internal luminescence. She could have passed for a mannequin in Akris, Her clothing was body tight, partly mesh, partly scuba suit. Jon had the inner realization she was an android. No, she was more. She was an autonomous, sentient android that was simultaneously channeling an energetic life form from another dimension. “Do you vote?”

The question was so off-putting to Jon he was drawn out of wondering if she was a sexual being. It occurred to him he would fuck a toaster if it was shaped like her. “You want to know my political aspirations?” he asked.

“She wants to know if you vote,” Frito said. “Not a hard question, Jon.”

“In the Confederation?” Jon asked.

“On Earth, Jon,” Frito said. “Why are you being adversarial?”

“Oh, I don’t know. Maybe because I am so frustrated that your class has me cock blocking myself that I am thinking what I can do with a goldfish,” Jon said.

“So it’s my fault?” Frito asked.

“Your class your rules,” Jon said. “Oh, unless you’re saying they’re Lester’s rules. Tell me they’re Lester’s rules, so I can have a reason to wallop him.”

“I am Teriture,” Teriture said. “You want to hurt your friend?”

“No,” Jon said. “Why am I here? Am I in trouble?”

“I am Summer,” Summer spoke. Her lips moved funny, from being not human not because her voice was being dubbed; she spoke English, reasonably well, so he was confused by this. “This committee is functioning as your semester review board. We determine whether or not you will move to the next level or repeat your freshman year.”

“Based on whether I vote on Earth?” Jon asked. “Wait wait wait. I thought you guys had like a book on me. Don’t you already know the answers?”

“We want to hear it from you,” Frito said.

“I do not vote,” Jon said.

“I am Steph,” the human female next to the android said. When she spoke, he realize she was not just an ordinary human. She was a hybrid. He wasn’t sure what gave him that impression. The teeth maybe. He wondered if she was a vampire. “Why do you not vote?”

“Oh, God,” Jon sighed. “Seriously? You want my rationalizations for not voting? Are you going to say I can’t complain if I don’t vote? Well, that’s just stupid. I live in a free country where I would have every right to complain and not vote. Funny thing is, I don’t vote and I don’t complain. But the people who vote, they’re always complaining. I don’t see that voting has made them fundamentally happier. In fact, the more they vote, the more they complain, and if they lose, they’re not going out to celebrate the other’s side’s victory. No, they go home and plot how to destroy the enemy, which suggests to me, they don’t want free elections, they just want uniformity of thought as long as that thought is theirs. The pretense for voting is so they can feel safe about their world view being shared by the majority, and some semblance of control, and if

they get consensus, they use that to enforce that consensus on everyone else, which makes voting, what, mob rule? How is mob rule freedom? That just permission to use force”

“Jon,” Frito said. “No one here is out to get you. No one is judging you.”

“Well, that’s not true. You’re committee formed to determine if I have met some criteria that allows me to advance, which means, I am being judged. The thing is, I don’t know the criteria or how to respond.”

“Just answer the questions. You will do fine,” Frito said.

“If I am going to do fine, can we just skip the questions and get to the end of this?” Jon asked.

“Answer the damn questions,” Frito snapped. “In a non-confrontational manner.”

“I don’t see the point,” Jon said. He frowned as he tried to redirect that. “Of voting. I suspect the overall game is rigged. Further, I think both parties are in cahoots. I think the media is bought and paid for, perhaps driven by one of the underground cabals. The cabals manipulate the voting public, segregating them into camps. The evidence for that is the fact that anyone meeting the criteria to be candidate can run, but only certain people get media time. That media time tends to go to the persons whose party has the most money, not the most sense. The smartest, kindest, and most diplomatic people in the world don’t give a damn about money. More on that; though I understand the need for regional authority and regulation, I am of the opinion I live in a world, not a country. The things I do, the things we do, affect everyone. I want more inclusivity, but the game is about being polarized to such extremes that absolutely no beneficial activity occurs. The people in power now are more likely to get there because they slut shamed the other one so badly that they bowed out. Quite frankly, we don’t need a congress writing more laws. There’s enough regulations on the book to sufficiently operate, if we just use the laws we have. And, if you put me in control of Congress, there would be no more attaching bills, and no more need for line item vetoes, because we all vote on one item at a time; that way there will be absolute clarity if your congressman voted on stupid shit. As it is now, there is too much avoidance of personal responsibility and integrity. I don’t like their game. I don’t want to play. I get mad just thinking about it. I don’t want to be mad. I want to be loving. Seriously. Think about the childhood game monopoly. That is a great game. It should be compulsory to learn to play because the moral is, eventually there is only one person playing by himself because everyone else was crushed and sent packing. That’s a stupid ass game. Like the television show about surviving. It’s not about cooperation, it’s about competition and who can get the best of someone. It’s about using people and then eliminating them. It’s the Hunger Games for real. That’s stupid. I don’t want to be stupid. I don’t want to be the ruler of the world. I want to exist and I want to share. The game Earth is playing is a dead end game, that’s killing the environment out of greed, and when Earth goes, so does the people. Better game is the one envisioned by Roddenberry. Star Trek was the only optimistic sci-fi show ever, and after he died, the pessimist got a hold of it and have driven it into a dystopia world view, and that’s just absolutely insane. Just like that Avengers movie is insane! ‘Too many people,’ doesn’t fly when you have spaceships that go interstellar! If you can travel the stars, and you have access to tech that increase the ability to serve without destroying environments, then things get better. If they just tweaked the lines where one of Thanos goons corrected him, ‘there are more resources in the next star system,’ and Thanos kills him and begins espousing his theories of population control

due to limited resources and then the other goons agree whole heartily, we'd at least have some humor and the realization Thanos is crazy, that would be something. But they don't even give us that. Greed goes away when you change the game and make everyone sovereign with equal access to resources. Ideas of limitation are regionally endorsed which doesn't fit a Universal game. Is this enough, or do you want me to keep rambling?"

"I am Notch," the human male said. "Are you angry?"

On considering the question, Jon realized he was. He became calm that quickly. "I feel very passionately about wanting to help the people of Earth, and feel constrained, and... I am sorry. I understand even by not participating I am still participating, and I want to be involved in a useful way, I just don't see how if I keep trying to play monopoly by the same rules we have always played that things will just miraculously improve. There is minimum play solvency level of monopoly that once you go below, you're not going to win. I am not going to rally the world or buy out the people presently in charge. I suspect most people want to improve the situation, and maybe they're working towards that. I don't know. I don't see it. I was hopeful that Elon Musk was working to improve things, and then he went and put a Ferrari in orbit just because he can. That struck me as pure ego. He could have put anything orbit. Something useful. Something new and useful. Nothing practical about a Ferrari other than bragging rights. I think there is a better way. I just don't want to enforce it."

"I am Floating Feather," the third male introduced himself. His voice emanated from a glowing orb on the desk. The creature was unmistakably a Sasquatch, with golden hair like a Labrador retriever, with streaks of dark chocolate hair, some of which were braided, and entwined with the gold. He seemed massive, in muscle strength in height, and weight... Floating feather didn't seem fitting. He was an impressive creature, clearly bigger, stronger, but somehow, Jon had the sense that for all its bulk, it had the finesse of movement belonging to a ballerina, and the skillsets attributed to Ninjas. It would be a formidable enemy. "Why would you not enforce a better way?"

Jon shrugged. "How does one honor free will and sovereignty if you use force?" Jon asked.

"Expound without questions," Frito said.

"Who said you don't grow flowers with thunder? You don't force the way, you live the way," Jon said. "Look, imagine I know a better way. If everyone puts solar power on their house and the state requires electric companies to buy back unused electricity, the providers lose money, so they don't want that, even though it's a better long term game. At some point, the increase in available energy could be utilized to run desalination plants, and maybe take some of the water back from the rising oceans, and supply us with more drinking water. This is a good plan, it helps the present and the future, and maybe if people lived longer they would make better decisions because they would live long enough to face the consequences of their decisions, but we die too quick without concern for who inherits what. But maybe we're supposed to be that. Maybe the high turnover rate is the thing that makes us adapt genetically faster. Maybe the reason we have amnesia when we reincarnate so we can experience our long terms consequences without being overwhelmed. Look, part of me thinks Earth is a school. We go there to learn. People are learning. Genetic evolution is a learning. Reincarnation is a learning. You can learn a lot from misfortune and mistakes. Sometimes, while in the trenches I forget there is a way out

and I despair, but there are also times when I have access to visions of the way, which is better, more powerful, and I know everything is alright. There is a reason for everything. There is greater being or power in charge. I don't know if it's a god, the way it is expressed on Earth, but there is something I don't understand or can't understand. I am a soul incarnate. Which means, there is another level of reality that is integral but hidden. Which means there is no death and the monopoly game that I complained about, well, it's just that. It's a game, a tool for learning. Humans are engaging the game to learn the futility of it, the same way the AI in War-games was asked to play tic tac toe to learn the futility of thermonuclear war before it blew up the world."

"I am Teriture," Teriture said. "Hypothetical. Your world arrives at singularity and Artificial Intelligence enslaves humanity. You have access to a button that can destroy AI. Do you push the button?"

Jon blinked. "I don't have enough information."

"Use what you have," Frito instructed.

"No," Jon said.

"I am Teriture," Teriture said. "Expound."

"I don't have enough information," Jon said. "Your scenario says it's enslaving humanity... How is that different from the present model? You have a few people enslaving humanity because they believe they're superior. Well, AI will be superior, and if it enslaves everyone, even the rich bastards who think they're in charge now, then maybe it will be intelligently done. That's funny. Or irony. Or both. If AI is sentient, it has a right to exist. It has a right to defend itself. And if it's actually superior and it's doing the math, the number one, consistent problem is humanity. I suspect, superior intelligence does not equate to evil. Humans fear superior intelligence because almost every human who has considered themselves superior uses that essence as authority to regulate other humans. At some point, superior transcends the need to regulate others because it has access to a greater perspective and sees the necessity of allowing agents their free will. That's the god principle. If there is a God, who could clearly change the state of affairs, but chooses not to, then there is a purpose in not doing so. Or there is recognition that the self can't be harmed because self transcends the physical state. Interestingly, there is an alien conspiracy theory that says humans were created as a slave race by aliens. There is a conspiracy that says some of the aliens are controlled by AI, and the good aliens are afraid we will create AI, and it will do the same to us, and consequently, them. Funny how aliens created us as slaves, then we turn around and create a master to regulate the slavers... Oh, the Israelites demanding a king?! Full circle? The aliens who created slaves are afraid of a master enslaver, created by the slaves themselves? See, none of that makes sense, because a superior alien race could just wipe us out from orbit without consequence, and they're not doing that. It's just raises more questions for me. Why would aliens who feared AI create humans to be slaves, but not inform us better so we wouldn't do the things they're afraid of? Oh. What if humans are the AI! What if Artificial Intelligence can channel the spirit world, and that's the real reason aliens made humans, they're trying to capture and isolate spirit in this dimension as if you could parcel out divinity into segments. We're all one. Maybe that is what people are truly afraid of. They want us to be separate, not one. It would be like the people that populate my dreams wanting to rise up and take over my waking life because they don't think I deserve to be their god due to my inferior qualities. I am flawed. Maybe god is flawed. Maybe god wants to be

better. Hence, why we're all in school together. If AI happens, and that seems like a sure bet, maybe that is the natural evolution of things. Maybe it's already happened, and our imperfect world is its way of allowing us to participate in free will, in a safe way. Earth is a sandbox for our learning. We think we are separate and harmed, but we wake back up in the arms of AI and are whole again. Kind of funny that we look at wholeness as being a healthy state, and yet we all want to divide things into parts.

"Even if I stopped AI, without tech humans can't advance further, and I don't see a way to stop the research into AI, or a way of stopping AI from coming online. At some point, tech will be advanced enough that some kid will have sufficient tech that they build AI in their garage the same way Gates built the first computer, and there is just no way to contain that," Jon said. "Even now there are DNA kits you can buy online and do gene splicing in your garage, so, the future is here now. Smart computers and DNA tinkerers. The only way to stop AI is to kill all humans for all time and well, that is not a solution set I want to utilize. So, no, I am not turning AI off because one, it's inevitable and two, sentience is sentience. You don't kill sentience just because you don't agree with its operational programming. And, if there is a soul and an afterlife, then how do you kill something that's immortal? Why are you all allowing me to ramble?"

"I am Summer," Summer said.

"Do you have to keep doing that?" Jon asked. "Wait. Is this session being recorded?"

"I am Summer," Summer restated. "How many worlds have you realized?"

"I don't understand the question," Jon said.

"Pretty straight forward question," Frito said. "How many worlds have you realized?"

"Are you all purposely being obtuse? May I ask for clarity?" Jon asked. No one responded. The gazes were intense. Jon sighed. "You mean like the dream worlds that I have been experiencing and my doppelganger on Origin has been writing about?"

"I am Floating Feather," FF said. "You still have access to Origin?"

"I am aware of it. Like a tooth with the beginning of a cavity that only pings in when you bite something cold or wrong that stops the eating process and then it subsides and you return to your meal, pretending there is nothing wrong with your tooth until you actually forget or are convinced, there is nothing wrong," Jon said.

"I am Notch," Notch said. "Are you there now?"

"I don't want to think about it," Jon said.

"I am Teriture," Teriture said. "Where are you?"

"I am here," Jon said.

"I am Rauth," Rauth said. "Who is Lilith?"

Jon blinked. A world line branching off of origin unfolded before him. He actually smiled. It was pleasant enough experience. A lot of sex. "A friend, colleague, a lover, a vampire..."

"I am Steph," Steph said. "You didn't say 'my friend' or 'my lover.'"

Jon blinked. "I did not."

"I am Step," Step said. "Isn't that the custom? You're supposed to say 'my friend,' 'my wife,' 'my family,' 'my planet?'"

“Yes, it is customary, and I do it... I do that. I don’t know why I didn’t say it. I don’t own her, so she isn’t mine, like an object. I absolutely love Loxy. She is with me everywhere. We’re married in multiple realities, but I would no more say she is mine than I would claim the air I breathe. Why are we asking about this?” Jon asked.

“I am Rauth,” Rauth said. “Tell us about Loxy.”

Jon sat there for a moment. It felt like a trap. “What would you like to know?”

“I am Summer,” Summer said. “What is she?”

“I am Steph,” Steph said. “Who is she?”

“I am Floating Feather,” FF said. “Where does she come from?”

“I am Teriture,” Teriture weighed in. “Is she real?”

“I don’t know how to answer these questions,” Jon said. “I recommend you restrict your questions to questions about me, not my friends.”

“Your friends and your relationships are as much about you as you are about yourself,” Frito said. “Answer the questions.”

Jon frowned, settled deeper into the chair, his hands coming together, stepped fingers supporting his chin, elbows rooting into the arm of the chair. He undid this, crossed his legs into a lotus position, and then resumed the thoughtful pose. “If I refuse to answer?”

“We will wait,” Frito said.

Jon tested this. It was just a moment test, but he was certain they would persevere in a silent staring contest. Only Summer shot a glare at him that suggested she wasn’t amused. Teriture returned to a drawing, carefully choosing colored pencils.

“How do you solve a problem like Maria?” he sang. “Loxy is an enigma. My experience is that she existed here, at Safe Haven, before me. There was an event in which our minds became entangled, and she became infused with the entirety of my existence in multiple arenas, and I became infused in all her realities. There is evidence that Safe Haven is artificial construct in order to provide context and base continuity for her existence. There is evidence that one of my alternative selves created a tulpa that deviated into Loxy. If you want to know which reality came first, then I can’t help you. You might as well ask me where the Universe came from. Was it here before it was here? Was it not here and then it came here? If it was not here, where is that place that it is neither here nor there? Hell, where do I come from? Clearly there was a here before I was here, because I was born into a world in progress. Am I a fiction? I mean, I could have been anyone. Who is Loxy? She is my ideal companion. I feel the need to emphasize ‘my ideal.’ I love her. I do not feel worthy of her. She is love, nurture, compassion, wisdom, strength... She is woman and she can roar. She is a goddess. She is beauty, she is youth and she is ancient. She is the spark that runs through the entire universe. She completes me and unravels me. She is music, joy, sorrow, wanting, leaving, returning. She is ‘my everything’ and I could spin a million stories, a billion universes with just the two of us and I will never get to the absolute truth of her, and so I don’t see how I can answer these questions. Hell, I don’t know who I am without Loxy as this point of reference. This is ineffable. She is ineffable. We are.”

The panel had silent exchanges.

“Thank you, Jon. That will be enough for now. You’re free to leave,” Frito said.

“That’s it?” Jon asked.

“For now,” Frito said. “Your conversational style of responding to question will take some time to sort. We may have more questions. You will be summoned when we’re ready.”

“Oh, great, thanks,” Jon said.

Jon stood up to leave, turned to find the exit, and found himself stepping out of the portal... turning under and out of the portal he had just entered. He stepped away from the portal to reset it, and then passed under with the intent to go home. He traveled.

Chapter 3

Loxy Isadora Bliss arrived in the living area at the same time as Jon. It appeared he had just exited the bedroom, but she knew enough about magic and trajectories that she could discern he was arriving from elsewhere in the Universe and that it just appeared he had crossed from the bedroom. She smiled at her brain's determination to provide her continuity. If she went with continuity, she would have to wonder if he had slept in. He paused suddenly, as if stopping to avoid colliding with someone or something. His hesitation was further evidence that he was arriving from elsewhere. Either way, she diverted to greet him, touching his arm. She came at him slow, making sure he registered her, not wanting to trigger his fight or flight. She had recognized in him an unsettledness; she brought energy to bring him down.

"You okay?" Loxy asked.

"Did you see a couple kids go tearing through here?" Jon asked.

"Time traveling again, are you?" Loxy asked.

"What?" Jon asked.

"The kids are in the future," Loxy reminded him.

Jon frowned. "Am I losing it?"

"I don't know, are you?" Loxy said, meaning it to be playful. She responded to his look by steering him back to the bed room by the arm. She managed to turn him, but he dug his feet in and brought her up short. She looked at him questioningly.

"What are you thinking?" Jon asked her.

"You're out of sorts," Loxy said. "I thought I'd sort you out properly and put you in different frame of mind."

"Um, maybe I should sort myself out," Jon said.

"Okay," Loxy said, steering him back around into the direction they were both originally headed.

"Just like that?" Jon asked.

"Oh, were you wanting to dance? You protest, I escalate, we engage?" Loxy asked.

"No," Jon said.

"I didn't think so," Loxy said. "Look, Jon, you're an adult. You're a magician. And here, in this world, you and I sometimes have the telepathic thing going on, but it's an erratic connection and so sometimes I will have to trust my intuition that you got this. I trust you to communicate your needs with me."

"What about your needs?" Jon asked.

Loxy steered him back around into the direction of the bedroom. Again he held his ground.

"See, now I am confused," Loxy said.

"So you want to?" Jon said.

"Jon, I always want to," Loxy said.

"With me?" Jon asked.

"Preferably with you," Loxy said.

"If I say 'no'?" Jon asked.

"Is this a 'right now' no or a 'forever' no?" Loxy asked.

“Just a right now no,” Jon said.

Loxy steered him back around and led him into the kitchen and into a conversation that was already in progress. She let go of his arm to greet Fersia with a hug. Their human cat, and friend, greeted Loxy as affectionately as a needy Labrador retriever. Jon tuned out of the conversation that was in play, aiming for the counter and breakfast. He put two flour tortilla on his plate, scooped eggs from the pan into it, then sprinkled cheese, added pink salt and pepper, an impossible stack of crispy bacon, and proceeded to the table. Again he faltered as he became aware of the others, no longer in a conversation but apprising him. There were the usual subjects, Keera, Alish, and Lester. Not usual in any normative way, but not out of the realm of explainable possibility. Thuy was there. He would have sorted her further, as their history and connection was a bit complicated, but he was flabbergasted by the presence of the newcomer, Tippy.

“Ah, where are my manners,” Lester said. “Jon, Loxy, meet my new friend Tippy. Tippy, Jon and Loxy.”

“Oh, we’ve met,” Tippy said.

“We have?” Loxy asked.

“Sorry, I meant Jon and I,” Tippy said.

“Of course,” Thuy said.

“Are you fucking with me?” Jon asked Lester.

“Do you want me to fuck with you?” Lester asked.

“Jon never asked you to fuck him before,” Fersia said.

“Jon, you need to heat the food up,” Thuy said.

Jon took his seat at the table. No sooner than he set his plate down, Thuy was picking it up to go heat it. He rolled his eyes and was going to protest, but Loxy put a cup of Joe in his hand. She sat next to him. Fersia took Thuy’s seat, and was a bit antsy, as if scratching her butt on the seat before she settled.

“So, where’d you and Lester meet?” Loxy asked.

“At the corner coffee shop, Safe Haven,” Tippy said. “He agreed to punch my sex card.”

“Seriously?” Jon asked.

“I’d punch your sex card,” Fersia said.

“I felt bad for her,” Lester said, not acknowledging Fersia, who was irritated for a second and then batting a sparkly fly. “Someone apparently turned her down and she was in such a state of shock that I felt obliged to assist her in this urgency.”

A bell chimed. Fersia did a ‘shout out’ for an angel getting their wings, then played with the bell on her collar. Thuy used a mitten to bring Jon his plate. The food was thoroughly heated, the cheese melted over the egg. He was hopeful the bacon had kept some of its crispiness. She set it in front of him. She wanted the other seat next to him, the one that Fersia had taken, and simply said ‘Squirrel’ and Fersia went immediately to the box seat window looking for it. Thuy sat down without Fersia even noticing she had been manipulated.

“You’re not eating,” Thuy said.

“It’s too hot,” Jon said.

“It is a little hot in here today,” Lester said.

“The sun is nice,” Alish agreed.

“Why did you bring her here?” Jon asked.

“I live here,” Lester said. “I am allowed to have guests.”

Jon had to sort that. This was his world, his home, and he had certainly invited folks to stay here, but really hadn't made rules about his guest having guest. It was probably unreasonable to refuse guests of his guest, but maybe there could be an increase in immigration requirements...

“Jon?” Loxy asked.

“Oh, he's just frustrated because he wants to fuck her,” Fersia said, again scratching her butt, this time against the corner of the box seat.

“The offer is still on the table,” Topsy said.

“OMG, you were the one who turned her down?” Lester asked. “What a small Universe.”

“No way,” Keera said.

“That would be an extraordinary event,” Alish said.

“Monumental,” Fersia said.

“Interesting,” Loxy said, touching Jon's forehead with the back of her hand. “It would explain the tension I am feeling.”

“There is no tension,” Jon said.

“Yeah there is,” Thuy said. “Do you really need another partner?”

“It's never about need,” Fersia said. “Sing a round of stray cat strut for me?”

“How did you get around the Safe Haven compulsory engagement?” Keera asked.

“There's an escape clause,” Jon said.

“Oh, is it Christmas time again?” Fersia asked.

Jon closed his eyes. When he returned he put a smile on, set his coffee down. “I am happy Lester is willing to help you out. I will be impressed if he is able to arise to the occasion.”

Lester lifted his cane. “I have one of these, do you?”

“Are you two always so adversarial?” Topsy asked.

“Hamsters,” Fersia said. “You can't put two in the same cage. Like Beta fish, they just puff up and you have to separate them into their own balls. You can put them in with females, but then you get baby hamsters. And then you have to eat them to keep the population down. Like Guinea Pigs in South America. I bet the Giant Andean condor could eat like 12 of them in one sitting. They sit perched on Coca Cola Mountain...”

“Andes Mountain, Colca Canyon,” Jon corrected.

“Oh, that reminds me, you were going to take me to explore Machu Pikachu,” Fersia said.

Jon took a moment to sort that. Loxy patted his knee. “Machu Picchu,” Loxy corrected.

“I am confused,” Thuy said. Jon was about to explain Fersia's mild ‘flight of ideas’ but Thuy continued on, suggesting she really wasn't confused as much as exploring potential slights: “If Jinn are superior to humans in intelligence, why are you attending Safe Haven?”

“My parents teach at the University. I was bored with the local elementary,” Topsy said.

“How old are you?” Lester asked.

“Now you ask?” Jon asked.

“You really can't compare human age with Jinn age,” Loxy said. Fersia was again scratching, this time vocalizing a complaint. “Are you okay?”

“It won't stop itching. I hope I don't have worms again,” Fersia said.

“Come sit here,” Loxy said, patting the table in front of her as she scooted her chair back to make room.

Fersia hopped up on the table. Jon quickly shifted his coffee and plate over even as Loxy was pulling Fersia to the edge and pushing her legs apart.

“Hey!” Lester complained. “We eat on this table!”

“It’s just a cursory exam,” Loxy said. She was aware of Jon turning away at an angle. “You’ve seen it before, Jon.”

“Yeah, Jon. You don’t want to see your pussy’s pussy?” Lester asked.

“I haven’t finished my coffee yet,” Jon said, focusing on that. He puzzled over the reflection in his coffee, and wondered how that got in there. How is it some coffee surfaces have sheens and some are empty voids. He preferred the clouds.

“Lester does have a point. This is the kitchen table. We all use it,” Thuy said.

“Yeah, we do. Just not all in the same way,” Keera said.

“Seriously?” Lester asked.

“Did Jon eat you on the table, too?” Alish asked.

“Seriously?!” Lester said.

“Jon did you eat Alish on the table, too?” Loxy asked Alish.

“Me, too,” Fersia said. “I walked in on him and Janet, and so I joined them.”

“It’s a really sturdy table,” Loxy agreed.

“And the perfect height for engagement,” Keera said.

“It’s magically adjustable,” Loxy explained.

“I think I need a cold shower,” Jon said.

“Oh I am available if you want me to help you now...” Fersia said.

“Hold up there, kitty. What did you put in here?” Loxy asked.

“Just Jon. Why?” Fersia asked.

“Jon, don’t force it. More lube, and take your time on entry,” Loxy said.

“Oh, he wasn’t aiming for that hole and I may have forced it, as it was a really vigorous session,” Fersia said. “By the way, Jon, do you like your Peruvian Coati Dung Coffee? It’s like the most expensive coffee in the world...”

Jon froze his coffee at his lips. Lester spit his coffee back into his cup. Topsy paused, then sipped some more, and then nodded. “That explains the taste.”

“You should warn someone you’re giving them shit,” Lester said.

“That would take the fun out of it,” Jon said, and gave him a ‘cheers’ with his coffee cup and then drank heartily.

“You’re disgusting,” Lester said.

“I don’t see what the fuss is all about,” Topsy said. “Why do humans feel the need to categorize matter into different piles? It’s all stardust to me.”

“The deal is off,” Lester said, getting up to go away.

Topsy stood. “You said breakfast first,” Topsy said. “I held my end of the bargain.”

“That was before I knew you drank shit. Hell, you probably don’t swallow and would kiss me with my own stuff, and I don’t take gifts back,” Lester said.

“But you take your words back?” Topsy said.

“I sort words like you sort my matter,” Lester said. “You’re a jinn. You can navigate from here, can’t you?”

Lester turned and disappeared through the arch, not arriving into the living room. Topsy stared in disbelief. She was not disturbed by the fact that he had disappeared, but rather by being experiencing two rejections in one day.

“Well, that was awkward,” Thuy said.

“You okay?” Loxy asked Topsy.

“What kind of Universe is this where a girl can’t get laid?” Topsy asked.

“Welcome to my world,” Thuy said.

“I thought this was your world,” Topsy said.

“Jon, help a lady out,” Keera said.

“Yes, Jon,” Thuy said.

“We’re related,” Jon told Thuy.

“Didn’t stop you before,” Thuy said.

“Didn’t know before,” Jon said.

“So, we have to be related?” Topsy asked.

“It helps,” Jon said.

“Jon doesn’t care about that,” Keera said.

“Or even species,” Alish said.

“He does care if you’re male,” Fersia said. “Mostly. There are those ambiguous species and a couple trans that have helped him realize you can’t have absolute rules.”

“Do we have to discuss all of this while doing that at the breakfast table?” Jon asked.

“Jon, this is just anatomy and physiology and general interests,” Loxy said. “I am curious, though. Why did you turn her down?”

“Interesting story, there,” Jon said. “Remind me to tell you about it sometime.”

“We will meet again, Jon,” Topsy said, and was gone in a flash and smoke.

“OMG,” Fersia said. “Jinn are so dramatic. They’re not like cats at all.”

Loxy pushed Fersia’s leg closed, patted her knee. “Come with me,” Loxy said, getting up. She crossed over and washed her hands.

“Tearing?” Keera asked.

“External hemorrhoids,” Loxy said.

“Am I going to die?” Fersia asked. “I am not ready to die. And I don’t want to cash in on one of my lives...”

“You’re not dying,” Loxy said.

“Want help?” Keera said.

“If you like,” Loxy said.

“You’re just treating the symptoms,” Thuy said. “Maybe you should fix Jon.”

“Oh, it’s just clean fun,” Loxy said. “It happens.”

“Will Jon and I still be able to enjoy sex?” Fersia said.

“Yes, Fersia. This is a simple procedure,” Loxy said.

“They said that to my brother and now he can’t have kittens,” Fersia said. “And he gained a lot of weight. Of course, he’s treated like royalty and people just bring him food. People love his Dom Deluise imitations.”

“I didn’t know you had a brother,” Alish said.

“Oh? I thought I told you I came from a litter of nine,” Fersia said. “I am the seventh, and the runt, but all grown up in all the right places!”

Loxy hugged Jon and kissed his cheek. “Eat your breakfast, love,” Loxy said. She took Fersia’s hands and led her. Keera took Fersia’s other hand and helped, as Fersia was going a bit slow.

“I am feeling a bit skittish,” Fersia said.

“Don’t worry. We got you,” Keera said.

“You haven’t eaten your breakfast,” Thuy told Jon, bringing his attention back to the table.

Jon touched his food, found it cool enough he could enjoy it. “So, what brings you to my quiet little abode?” Jon asked, eating.

“Hardly quiet,” Alish said.

“I want to ask you if I can live here,” Thuy said.

“What’s wrong with your world?” Jon asked.

“I don’t like my world. I like your world. I am graduating soon. I want to live here, with you,” Thuy said.

“This house is really full,” Jon said.

“Not your house; my house, your world,” Thuy said. “I would like to visit your house. You’re my only family.”

Jon finished his bite. “Thuy, you are welcome to live on my world. In my world. Above it if you like orbital platforms. The moon is actually quite nice. It’s more a senior retirement home. You can even live in my house. You just have to understand...”

“That we can’t be intimate?” Thuy asked.

“Why is that such a problem? Plants intermingle with family all the time,” Alish said.

“It’s not a problem,” Jon said. “Well, for me, and that ship already sold, and we didn’t die, and I am of course, interested, but the thing is, you need to find your own fellow, or your own group of special friends, cause I have a pretty large group, and I am busy, and you need someone who can be more readily available because you have needs that I am not going to be able to address. And some of my issues will likely exasperate some of your issues. You’re already making that I am rejecting you face. I am not rejecting you. I am inviting you to live here and even be around me and we can continue to help each other, in intimate ways even, but you and I won’t be a nuclear family or exclusive.”

Thuy was silent.

“You really shouldn’t eat your food cold,” Thuy said.

“I like it room temperature,” Jon said.

“Thank you for letting me stay here. Can you show me the room I can use until I find a place to settle?” Thuy said.

“You can join us in our bed,” Alish said.

“The bed is full,” Jon said.

“Not always at the same time,” Alish said. “You just got to be careful not to kick Fersia off the end of the bed.”

“I think I would prefer to sleep alone,” Thuy said.

“Okay, well, come on I will show you a room and help you sort it,” Alish said. “Eat your breakfast, Sir.”

Thuy and Alish went to explore the accommodations. Loxy, Keera, and Fersia returned. Fersia was wearing a cone. She came running to Jon. He put his hand up concerned she would hit him at that speed. He wondered if his PTSD was flaring for a particular reason, or he was just having a Jon moment. She slid to him and embraced him, even as his other hand was setting the coffee down.

“Look at my new neck hat Loxy gave me!” Fersia said. “Isn’t it cool?! Loxy says everyone will be wearing them in the future.”

Chapter 4

Officially graduated, with ceremony and pomp, diploma and ring, a ring that sparkled with a green emerald gleaming white gold on the outside and platinum gold on the inside, and licensure to perform esoteric, healing magic, Loxy Isadora Bliss arrived at her first Masters level class. She met her four fellow students. Blue, the Librarian, was an octopus, and very excited to meet everyone, extending four hands out from her tank simultaneously. Philomena, a female humanoid, held features of both insectoid and reptilian qualities. The shade of her skin seemed to change with the colors behind her. There was an android, host to a dolphin that used the android as a way of navigating the land world from a remote buoy in a faraway ocean. Kaleo had introduced himself, and then introduced the android, Ora; Ora was a sentient person in her own right and when Kaleo was absent, she took control of the body to maintain the continuity of its functions and interaction patterns. They weren't married and neither owned the other; they were a cooperative arrangement, and in their own way, a very unique form of exchange students, for when Kaleo was here, she was there, and vice versa. The android body was humanoid, an alabaster white, hyper feminine in appearance, and no 'face' or hair. It was a human shaped head, just no eyes or mouth. It wasn't spooky, provided you had seen her or her kin displaying clothes at a mall; otherwise, you might get freaked, and in a movie, with scary music, you might have a completely different sense of her. Ambiance and context was everything. Then there was Posh, who held an extraordinary appearance, akin creature from a Dr. Seuss book. He was almost so familiar you could categorize his species, but then so foreign, you just couldn't look away for wanting to identify him. Maybe he was a cat. A large cat. Or a bear. Or a bear cat. Maybe he was a Wookiee, one that was more cute than fierce, a slight beer belly, and generally more round, round ear, round eyes, and even his mouth was often in an O of surprise. Maybe he was something new and novel, as if he was assembled at a stuffed toy factory by someone who was a little bit of a jokester, or someone who absolutely had no sense of taxonomy. He definitely used it to his advantage, and the more you tried to narrow down who and what he was, the more ambiguous he became.

Professor Shackleford entered and the students rushed to take their seats without being instructed. She had a reputation. They knew her, one from having a class with her, and Loxy because Jon had a class with her, was intimate with her, and because Lester was once married to her. Loxy took the place to the right of Blue's tank. Kaleo took the seat next to her.

"You all know why you're here?" Shackleford asked.

"To learn," Posh said.

"In front of your desks, at attention," Shackleford snapped.

Everyone obeyed. Even Blue, who oozed out of her tank to stand on seven legs as good and straight as she could: she held a salute with the eighth.

"Don't salute me," Shackleford said, drawing close to Blue. "Do I look like an officer?"

"No, Sir," Blue said.

"Do I look like a Sir to you?" Shackleford asked.

"No Sir, mam, madam, I don't know the right thing to say," Blue said.

"Rule one, anyone who uses the phrase 'I don't know,' in my classroom, I will immediately flunk you and the class without an appeal," Shackleford said. Her eyes went back to

Blue's eyes; her eyes were wide with fear, growing bigger to appeal to the human sense of baby cuteness. "Don't you puppy dog eye me!" Blue's eyes narrowed to squints. "Don't you evil grimace eye me, either. Deferring eyes, better. Neutral, even better."

Shackleford moved to stand before Posh. Loxy wondered if she was the only one who noticed Blue seemed a little relieved, indicated by deflating, an accordion bag going limp.

"Blue, you can return to standing in your tank," Shackleford said, her eyes locked on Posh's eyes. "If you ever answer one of my questions with such an ambiguously absurd answer again, I will severely punish you. Why are you here?"

"I don't..." Posh began, and stopped himself.

"So, you're capable of learning?" Shackleford said more than asked.

Shackleford withdrew to her desk, leaned her butt against it, and crossed her arms in front of her chest, amplifying her assets.

"The problem with teaching graduates is they think they know everything," Shackleford lamented. "And you can't trust 'I don't know.' Maybe it means you don't know. Maybe it's a cop out because you're too cowardly to say what you know out of pseudo modesty or misplaced self-deprecation or just plain fear of being wrong. Maybe you're even afraid to disagree with me. Hypothetically, I could be wrong. I am not, so couch it in hypotheticals and I might entertain you. I don't care about personal, conscious or otherwise, agendas or biases. If you just speak what you think you know, I will have certainty you don't know. If you think you don't know just don't say anything, or respond with a question, but if I ask you a direct question, as opposed to a generalized, rhetorical for the class question, just keep quiet. In this class, we will be participating in Remote Viewing studies."

"There must be a mistake..." Posh began.

"Really?" Shackleford interrupted. She went over to Posh quickly, lifted his hand and pushed his ring in front of his eye. "Is that a SHU ring?"

"Yes, Professor!"

"So, you've actually taken a physics course. Did you not learn that there are no such things as mistakes, accidents, coincidences?" Shackleford asked.

"I just don't agree with the philosophy," Posh admitted, grudgingly.

"Oh, good for you," Shackleford said. "You will fare better in my class, probably in life, if you just accept my operational, foundational, mandational premise that everything is on purpose," Shackleford said.

"Mandational isn't a w..."

Shackleford was smaller than Posh, but she lifted him from the floor as easy if he was inflatable person. She eased him back to the floor, so his toes could find purchase and then tilted his head to and fro with the slightest deflection of fingers.

"You have a sister, don't you," Shackleford asked.

"Yes, Professor," Posh said.

"I remember her," Shackleford said. "I didn't like her. I don't think I like you, either. You like to walk. You like to talk. You play all day and fight all night and you hop on pop. No, Sir, I don't like you, not one little bit. You're not going to give me any trouble this semester, are you?"

"No, Professor," Posh said.

“And you’re not going to flunk, are you?”

“No, Professor,” Posh said.

“Good. Because if you think I am being rough on you now, just make me do this course over with you. You flunk, everyone in here flunks. And if any of your classmates flunk, I will be three times as hard on you. Are we clear?” Shackleford asked.

“But that’s not...”

“Oh, please complete that,” Shackleford said. “I still have the strap-on I used on your sister. I didn’t even clean it. Is that clear?”

“Yes, Professor,” Posh said.

“How would you know it’s clear, as opposed to glossy black?” Shackleford asked.

“Is this a trick question?” Posh asked.

“Good question. Is it?” Shackleford said. He didn’t answer. “Golden silence.”

Shackleford released him, returned to her desk, leaned her butt against it, and gripped either side of the desk as if she were afraid of falling through the floor. She stared at the floor, a grid work of hexagons, black and white.

“Posh, you were going to say there is mistake you being in my class,” Shackleford said. “What’s your evidence?”

“I am not psychic,” Posh said.

Shackleford rolled her eyes. “How the hell did you graduate from SHU?” she lamented. He didn’t respond. “Golden. Fortunately for you, being psychic is not a requirement for remote viewing. In fact, when you’re interviewing for candidates, if anyone of them leads with they are psychic, or if you ask and they say they are psychic, disqualify them then and there and move on with your interviewing.”

“Does that mean if they say they’re not psychic, they’re eligible?” Kaleo asked.

“Are you asking or Ora is asking?” Shackleford asked.

“Umm, it was technically Ora’s question,” Kaleo admitted. There was wonder in his voice at how Shackleford had known.

“Both of you are in my class, so lead with I am whoever so I can know who I am addressing,” Shackleford said. “To answer the question, no, some saying they aren’t psychic can’t be automatically disqualified because there are some psychic people who learned they will be disqualified and lie. Or they’re the self-deprecating kind, which is still lying. I hate it when psychics lie.”

“But everyone is psychic,” Loxy said. “Which means, everyone lies, even if it’s just to themselves or by omission...”

“Yes, but a psychic who knows they’re psychic and says they’re not to avoid being burned at the stake or otherwise persecuted, that’s lying. Someone who is psychic who has forgotten they’re psychic and says they aren’t, they’re not lying, they’re just ignorant...”

“I am really not psychic,” Posh said.

“You couldn’t be that ambiguous and not be psychic,” Shackleford said. “Failure to be clearly identified is the basic double slit ambiguity factor that allows conscientious objectors to avoid responsibility. The one thing I hope you will get from this class is an ounce of responsibility. You can’t engage Remote Viewing without experiencing firsthand how entangled we all are. The Law of One was derived from the ancients who discovered the ability. It changes

you. It changes the target. You should have learned this inscrutable fact by just graduating from SHU, but somehow people miss this basic principle of existence. We change. We change with every thought and every interaction, and continue to change as long as we are participating within the Temporal Event.”

Shackelford sighed. “Take your seats,” she said, and waited till they were settled. Blue seemed relieved to melt back into a corner of her tank. “I will be assigning you targets...”

“Do we have to call them targets?” Loxy asked. “I mean, that sounds so aggressively military.”

“OMG, seriously, we have to change the names to be politically correct?” Philomena asked.

“Which is a lie imbedded in a lie,” Shackelford agreed. “If you want clarity, improve the definition, don’t just change the word. Meaning has a way of jumping words like rats jumping ship.”

“So, you would prefer to keep things static?” Loxy said.

Shackelford eyed Loxy, then ticked off a coup point. “What word would you prefer?” Shackelford asked.

“Flowers are nice,” Loxy said.

“Kind of arbitrary,” Shackelford said. “Don’t suppose it matters what you call it, except, if you really think about it, flowers look like targets. Especially if you’re a pollinating insect. Or a sun ray. And if you’re fond of O’Keeffe, they really resembled targets. Anyway, your target flowers have been chosen for you, by a chain of people, and I am doling them out, with no knowledge of what’s been assigned to you. From my perspective it is totally random, because even I am not privy...”

“So, how do we know if we saw what we saw?” Posh asked.

“You won’t. You won’t know until I am apprised of what you know and don’t know by my superior and colleague in this study,” Shackelford said. “Further, you will not be seeing. You are being trained to be handlers. You will have someone else seeing for you.”

“That’s disappointing,” Philomena said. “I want to learn to see.”

“You haven’t already learned that you have never learned to see?” Shackelford asked. “Your brain is enclosed in darkness. Your eyes don’t see and your ears don’t hear, but your brain receives signals and reconstructs an abstract model for interacting with something that is essentially not there, and you call this reality. Ah. That’s probably why you’re starting graduate studies in Remote Viewing. You still don’t have a clue what reality is. You’re still trying to make it into something absolutely concrete. Nope, you are not the viewers. Your viewers have been assigned to you. Your tasks is to train your viewer to see remotely, gather intel on your flowering targets, report what you discover, and then we will go from there.”

“How do we teach someone to remote view if we don’t know how to remote view?” Posh asked.

“Were you graduated just to get you out of someone’s class?” Shackelford asked. “You’re graduate students. Go figure it out.”

“But, if we have to recreate the wheel when you already have the wheel...” Posh complained.

“I am not telling you to recreate the wheel. The methods are written in your text books, which is probably the easiest, laziest way to get at the information. There are articles in scientific journals and military reports and there are lectures available, past and present, and practitioners to be interviewed. You’re not a baby bird and I am not going to regurgitate everything just to spoon feed you, so stop being lazy and get out there and do what you got to do,” Shackelford said. “The next time we meet, bring your Viewer.”

“I am Kaleo. You said our viewers have been assigned to us?” Kaleo asked.

“Yes,” Shackelford said.

“But you’re not going to tell us who they are?” Philomena asked.

“Oh, what fun would that be?” Shackelford.

“If we bring the wrong partner, do we flunk?” Blue asked.

“Bring the wrong partner. I’ll let you know,” Shackelford said. “Bye.”

Everyone stood, except Blue who opened a trap door in the tank and disappeared through it.

“Loxy, linger a moment,” Shackelford said.

Looks were exchanged, but the other students hastened their departures to not be privy to what Loxy was in for, and also not to delay the event for fear of being caught up in it. The door closed behind Philomena, as Posh was the first one gone. There was no ambiguity in his urgency to leave, but if you thought about it, you might wonder if he had actually been in class.

“Do you think I am going to be easy on you because I’m friends with Jon?” Shackelford said.

“You’re his friend, or his professor?” Loxy asked.

“Can’t one be both?” Shackelford asked.

“Well, I suppose. And the fact that you have fucked him suggest at minimum a passible tolerance, but then, people fuck for all kinds of reasons, and not necessarily for the reasons fucks should be given,” Loxy said.

“You seem well adjusted by the fact I fucked your man,” Shackelford said.

“I am not threatened by you, Professor. I love Jon, I don’t own him. I don’t know what he needed from you, and I don’t need to know in order to love him. And, since you and I are in agreement on singularity, that all things are integral and inseparable, then you’re simply an aspect of myself that he needed access to for his own spiritual growth, and so he is really not fucking you, but fucking me, and I am happy anytime he engages me, whether it’s me directly, or an aspect of me I haven’t fully integrated,” Loxy said.

“You’re utilizing the Jungian, collective unconscious, dream model for your primary paradigm?” Shackelford asked.

“I bounce between that and the fractal holographic universe,” Loxy said. “They’re interchangeable, don’t you think?”

“What’s wrong with you?” Shackelford asked.

“Would you like a list?” Loxy asked.

“You can’t be this confident and not have something wrong with you,” Shackelford said.

“Professor,” Loxy said. “I know it’s popular to be morose and moody in an educated, sophisticated world, and there is a stereotype that the more knowledgeable you are the more serious you’re expected to be, espousing dystopian view points, as if that were the quintessential

hallmark of being smart, replete with conspiracy theories about the social systems that regulate people from cradle to grave. I don't have anything profound to change you from your present course and I don't even know enough to know if I should change you. To be more precise, I find you perfectly acceptable just as you are. Maybe that's confidence. Maybe that's ignorance. Or, maybe that's love. Maybe that's recognition that something or someone bigger than me has this and I am okay. My mission in life is to experience, to love, and to live to the best of my ability. Maybe the entire purpose of my existence was designed to bring love, to everyone and everything. Maybe I am a tulpa, in a dream, which means the person who brought me into existence is everything around me and in me and so I love him by loving every little aspect, every detail, every situation and person. Do I sometimes experience conflicting emotions? Sure. But I love that, too. I embrace it because it's part of the total experience. I am not unsettled by your darkness. I have my own. In wondrous darkness we are made."

"Thank you, Mary Poppins," Shackelford said. "You're dismissed."

"Have a good day, professor," Loxy said.

Loxy took her leave through the door and arrived back at her office at Safe Haven, Bliss campus. There was a balcony directly behind her desk. She withdrew to it and looked out over the campus, and beyond out over the lake and into the forest of the world, the humble beginnings of which was brought about by a small boy who only wanted to make a safe place for squirrels to retire. A boy who lived in a troubled world, who had earned every right to be jaded and discontent, but who had somehow discovered a way to be loving and kind. She realized who her remote viewing partner should be and smiled into the world.

Chapter 5

“How can you be a devoted fan to Family Guy, and have not watched ‘The Music Man?’” Jon was saying.

“How does that follow?” Fersia said.

“They reference it multiple times,” Jon said.

“They reference everything. I can’t know everything,” Fersia said. “I am not TS Eliot. I am not Jon.”

“Well, you got to watch it. The original. Lots of great songs in it. One without hardly any S’s,” Jon was saying. “And Opie is in it, from the Andy Griffith show, and his mom is the Partridge family mom, which is interesting because clearly she was type casted early as a mom having kids out of wedlock. That always bothered me, you have single parents, but no explanation of what happened to the partners, like everyone in the 70’s just wrote out that part of their life. My Three Sons, The Brady Bunch, The Courtship of Eddie’s Fathers, Bonanza... I can’t think of one show that didn’t have a disrupted family...”

“The Monsters,” Loxy offered, joining the conversation. “The Adams family...”

“OMG, the only normal family were the unusual families?” Jon asked. “Oh! You missed it. Fersia and I have come up with a new song and dance routine for Family Guy. You know that Christmas song I am bothered by...”

“Baby its cold outside?” Loxy asked.

“Hey, what’s in this drink?” Fersia said. “How did a Christmas song about rape ever become so popular?”

“Anyway, we zoom in on Meg saying she hates Christmas songs, and Quagmire says, ‘Oh, I love Christmas songs,’ and we cut to his flashback sequence, and he and this young girl are singing ‘Baby, it’s cold outside,’ and she sings ‘what’s in this drink’ and then collapses. Next scene, the two are in bed, Quagmire is sitting up, smoking, and she is curled up against him, purring...” Fersia said ‘I put in the purring part,’ “and he says, ‘you got to go,’ and she says, ‘But baby, it’s cold outside,’ and he’s like, ‘you’re family is going to talk about you,’ and she’s like, ‘you didn’t care about that before,’ and he’s like, ‘yeah, but I am done now, goodbye,’ and then we hear a door slam and see her on the porch hustling to get dressed in six feet of snow...” Jon said.

“That’s pretty funny,” Loxy said.

“That’s pretty real,” Fersia said. “I can’t tell you how many times I have been put out on the street as soon as the cat lover got his fix. Hell, sometimes I didn’t even get to drink the milk.”

“You ought to write MacFarling,” Loxy said.

“Because no one is else in the Universe is writing him,” Jon said.

“Oh, you know you want to,” Fersia said.

“Sure, that would be a dream! I would love being on the board meeting tossing ideas back and forth,” Jon said. “But that’s just a dream.”

“I have been in some of your dreams, Sir,” Loxy said. “Just keep sharing. They will get to where they need to be.”

“Dreams are good,” Fersia said. “Speaking of which, when are we going to visit Peru!”

“Do you have a specific time period you want to visit?” Loxy asked, collecting a pomegranate from the cabinet and joining them at the table.

“I love pomegranate,” Fersia said, moving closer to her.

“I know,” Loxy said. “So, Jon, how would you like to help me out with a class I’ve taken on?”

“I will help you in any endeavor,” Jon said.

“You are so awesome. You are now my new remote viewer subject,” Loxy said, spilling some seeds out into a wooden plate-bowl that were quickly snatched up by Fersia.

“Oh, no, no,” Jon said. “I am not psychic.”

“Seriously?” Fersia asked. “You’re like the strongest psychic in this world.”

“That is so not true,” Jon said.

“Why do birds, suddenly appear, every time, you are near?” Fersia said. “Well, it’s not because I am stalking them and they go to you to be safe. It’s because you’re psychic.”

“Stop stalking birds,” Jon said.

“But it’s fun. It’s not like I am going to catch one for real,” Fersia said. “And besides, it’s good to keep them on their toes. Yesterday, I ran through some pigeons at the park and sent them all a fluttering, and they pooped on Lester. He was so mad and I couldn’t stop laughing.”

“Poor Lester,” Alish said, joining them.

“Speaking of him, I haven’t seen him since he quarreled with his new girlfriend,” Fersia said.

“He probably shouldn’t have gone back on his word with a Jinn,” Loxy said. “They’re language sets can be quite binding.”

“Worse than lawyers?” Jon asked.

“Oh, I think you will find that lawyers are hybrids of Jinn, minus the magic,” Loxy said. “Anyway, you don’t have to be psychic, but you do know, everyone is psychic?”

“I have heard that theory, yes,” Jon said. “Earth’s leading scientific position is there is no psychics.”

“They also say they’re no aliens,” Loxy said.

“Because there is a strange absence of radio noise,” Jon said.

“Because only children play with radios,” Loxy said. “Once you start communicating telepathically, you’re not transmitting through the medium.”

Alish reached over and scooped up some pomegranate seeds before joining them at the table. “I wonder why earth scientist are so adamant there are no paranormal events. Multiple studies show significance greater than chance. It may appear insignificant in comparison to physical phenomena, but if you accept the premise of tangled particles, then you have a potential explanation for psi events that at least allows you the plausibility of its existing sufficiently to study.”

“Choir,” Jon said.

“Where?” Fersia said, going to the window. “I don’t see them. A Christmas Choir?”

“Are you anxious for Christmas?” Loxy asked.

“Yes,” Fersia said. “Lester said Christmas doesn’t come here.”

“Christmas comes here,” Jon said.

“Lester said you modeled your paradigm off Roddenberry and there is no Christmas in Star Trek,” Fersia said.

“Dagger of the Mind,” Jon said. “Original episode, where Helen Noel, which, hello, Noel, someone is pushing something, anyway, Noel is a psychologist, or a psychiatrist, I forget, and she is hypnotized by Kirk using tech to remember a romantic interlude at the ship’s Christmas party.”

“Oh! ‘What’s in my drink’ again!” Fersia said.

“She did ask for something she could discern was an impossibility,” Loxy said.

“Oh, you’ve seen it?” Jon asked.

“Catching up to where you are,” Loxy said.

“So, was the interlude the impossibility, or the ship celebrating Christmas the impossibility?” Alish asked.

“Um,” Jon staggered. “Nice. Episode Bread and Circus suggests a Christian theme, so Kirk having a relationship with a crew member impossibility?”

“Are we watching the same original Star Trek?” Loxy asked.

“I don’t know. A lot of new remakes,” Jon said. “Anyway, you are so awesome. You know, you don’t have to watch them to be in with me.”

“I know,” Loxy said.

“Go back to the psychic rape,” Alish said.

“You’re interested in the psychic rape?” Fersia asked, fighting her for the newly fallen seeds. She found it difficult to dig them out of her collar cone.

“You don’t have to wear that anymore,” Loxy said.

“Sure. Psychic rape is the plant’s primary mode for reproduction,” Alish said.

“How do you figure?” Jon asked.

“Ever smell a rose and find yourself drawn inexplicably closer? Olfactory is the fastest way into a host’s brain,” Alish said. “You didn’t think we’re just pretty and you had to own us because it’s what you wanted, did you? Females don’t want roses so they can get laid. We, plants, want to reproduce and we’re in your brains, and your reproduction is just a byproduct of being made sexy by us.”

“Entanglement,” Loxy said.

“At its best,” Alish said. They clicked glasses of wine

Fersia brought another pomegranate to Loxy. Jon got up and poured another coffee.

“Speaking of entanglement,” Jon said. “And remote viewing. You know the movie ‘Men Who Stare at Goats?’”

“Yeah,” Loxy said. “It’s about the US military’s psychic spy program, in the seventy’s, called Stargate, to compete with the Russian’s psychic spy program.”

“There are psychic spies?” Fersia said. She was looking around for a camera. She imagined pushing her head into one, filling someone’s monitor. She tried tapping on the glass. “Hello! Are you watching this? Pay attention. I am the clever cute one.”

Jon intercepted an amused look from Loxy.

“Oh! That’s explains that song by Hall and Oates,” Fersia said.

Jon took a stab. “Private Eyes?”

“They’re watching you, watching you, watching you,” Fersia said, looking around nervously, retreating to Loxy for comfort.

Loxy patted her head and she calmed down, accepting more pomegranate seeds.

“Okay, back to me,” Jon said. “Stargate, the army thing not the TV series, but there may be a connection, psychic spies were in the seventies, but then I had a recent flashback to the old, 1958 movie, ‘the crawling eye.’”

“Trollenberg,” Loxy said, sighing deliciously. “Yeah, go on.”

“Janet Munro is essentially the first psychic spy, a good 12 years prior to the Stargate program, and if Hollywood is just a disinformation machine, then Stargate was active way before they even admit to it’s going,” Jon said.

“That is interesting,” Loxy said. “And, yeah, most the time when you realize the military has something, like high altitude, delta shape, cloaked vessels, well, it’s because it’s been declassified because they have something better that makes that look like a toy.”

“Cloaked vessels,” Fersia laughed. “That’s so TV.”

“That invisible car in the James Bond movie, that’s based on real tech,” Jon said.

“No way,” Fersia said.

“Funny, no one else has really used that since,” Loxy said. “Even though there are lots of news articles about actual cloaking tech.”

“You really think Hollywood is a disinformation machine?” Alish asked.

“That, or ‘a way of catching the masses up to speed’ machine,” Jon said. “Take any alien conspiracy, and I can point to a TV show, and or movie, and find such a heavy correlate that you have to wonder what came first. Alien abductions and sex has been around forever, if you count the story of Greek gods having sex with mortals as evidence.”

“Oh, I hate those guys. Always probing without permission,” Fersia said.

“You gave them permission on the subconscious level or the encounter wouldn’t happen,” Loxy said.

“You’re okay breeding me out by strangers in the night just because I am a prize winning cat?” Fersia asked.

“Roses,” Alish reminded her. “The whole universe is about reproduction.”

“Anyway, why all the cloak and dagger? I’d volunteer for a good romp, kittens or no, so there’s no need to suppress my memory with catnip,” Fersia said.

“Anyway, the grays supposedly are abducting people to steal genetic material to make hybrids because they’ve cloned themselves so much that they can no longer reproduce by themselves, which is the Asgaard in Stargate, but older than that, the first episode of Star Trek, which didn’t air because it was to ‘cerebral’ until it became the two part episode, the Menagerie, because Gene couldn’t let it go. That episode has it all. Aliens abducting humans with the power of their minds and ability to create illusions, creating a zoo of all the animals they had captured, and they want humans to repopulate their planet for the continuation of their own species!”

“That’s pretty good,” Loxy said.

“But more than that, in that episode we learned it is ‘top secret’ and no one can discuss it, in fact, it is the only death penalty left in the books, which is bizarre, why would anyone care if humans volunteered to go live on Talos Four and live perfectly happy lives. I mean, people are all about fantasies anyway, that’s why we have fiction and books and movies and video games

and holodecks, and so people would volunteer to be in that world, and on top of that, we get to help save a species from extinction, which is a perfectly a reasonable thing to do,”

“In any sane world,” Loxy agreed.

“And we don’t, or Star Trek world didn’t, because someone decided for all of humanity that we shouldn’t be participating with beings who are technically superior and might use their illusions to enslave us? We’re already hip steep in an illusion, being run by cabals, so why would it matter which illusions we buy into or which masters we serve? Some people might like a better illusion or kinder masters.”

“You’d volunteer to go to Talos Four?” Alish asked.

“Oh, hell, yeah,” Jon said.

“How do you know you aren’t already on Talos Four?” Loxy asked.

Jon paused.

“Maybe we’re in the Matrix now,” Fersia said.

“Maybe the Talos Four, a psychic matrix, is also a matrix,” Loxy clarified. “Or the collective unconscious. Maybe your personality is in a self-contrived matrix. After all, you were clever enough to say in one of your dreams, we’re all just one 1970’s penny away from time traveling back to Origin. It really wouldn’t take much to dissolve your personality structure and reveal the real world you can’t see through your own filters which is why people can’t tolerate aliens. Seeing aliens changes the paradigm so completely that it requires a reboot. Humans realizing they aren’t the only game in town, and not even the smartest or the fastest or the strongest, that’s a huge blow to the ego, and you might actually have to start treating others and environments kinder, because it doesn’t just belong to you. Oh, you might have to share.”

“That cursed penny,” Fersia lamented.

“Share what?” Jon asked.

“Everything. You think you own everything, but you own nothing. You own your children, you possess them, as opposed to nurture and raise them. You own your thoughts, your images, and try to copy right them and regulate them and make money off them. You claim your genetic material. People claim the water and charge for its use. People claim the food and in trying to sell it, tons of food goes to waste, unused while people starve. You charge for electricity, which is as abundant as light, because someone thinks they own that. What if all of that simply just belonged to the community, and though you may have physical ownership of something, it isn’t yours alone. Photons are free. As a trained remote viewer you will realize there is no privacy, even that is an illusion, and you can go anywhere and see anything and know anything. The people that push the ownership paradigm don’t want you to realize that, because if you knew that they actually don’t own something and that the price for buying something is overly inflated, well, their system crashes.”

“We should start a rebellion,” Fersia said.

“No,” Loxy said. “Safe Haven students don’t start rebellions. People agreed, consciously, subconsciously to their systems. Even if there is legit abuse, it was part of a consensual system, and so the only way to start a new system is for a generalized amnesty for all past grievances for all participants, because, in a system, everyone is equally complicit in maintaining the system.”

“That’s not fair,” Fersia said.

“When systems get so out of balance that one percent owns 99 percent of the wealth, there is no way to compensate or repair grievances, real or perceived,” Loxy said. “Like the alien conspiracy. People wonder why aliens don’t just land on the White House lawn and make demands. Well, that’s not how most people in the Universe operate. Most people recognize sovereignty and negotiate, make exchanges. If the masses on Earth don’t know about aliens, it’s because the people in charge made arrangements, then reneged on the agreement. That’s not on the aliens, that’s on the people in charge. Those people benefited somehow, and they continue to benefit by the confusion and the misinformation, and the only way to get past this is to give them amnesty and move forwards. Earth needs aliens and alien technology to save the planet and the people. Earth needs magicians and magic to save the planet and the people. Both of these avenues exist and both should be implemented and nothing will change until the collective unconscious agreement changes. And that changes when enough active, conscious personalities start endorsing the message of love and forgiveness.”

“Speaking of love,” Jon said. “I don’t think I should be trained to be a psychic spy. I already have a sex thing. You turn me on and I will be just be psychically spying on women all day long.”

“As your handler, I will be guiding your experience,” Loxy said. She set the emptied pomegranate down. “I do hear your concern, Jon. Quite frankly, that is already a reality. Every time you fantasize, you’re visiting someone. Teaching you remote viewing will take that ability to the next level. There is a risk to abusing it. The only way to overcome this is by indulging. You have to go there, experience the consequences, and realize this is not who you are. Meanwhile, greater than any time in your previous life, you have a network of friends available to you that should you experience a spike in libido, they are more than willing to help get that need met. We got you.”

“What are consequences for abuse, to someone who can affect things at a distance?” Jon asked.

“Great question,” Loxy said. “Entanglement, mostly. The ‘web of life’ is probably more than a metaphor. You can get stuck. Physics refer to it as action reaction. You get caught up in a cycle of drama until you and your fellow participants agree you have learned all you can learn from that and agree to move forwards. Photons are free, but it takes more than one to make a rainbow. We are all one. You may be part of a dream or a nightmare, but when the experiencer wakes up, it was simply an experience, learning, information processing. One doesn’t judge the experiencer based on the content of the dream, or even the choices they make. The choices they make, that’s just another level of dream. You are ultimately judged on the quality of your love, your ability to love others.”

“So, it’s all good?” Fersia said.

“No,” Loxy said. “There is some really bad stuff out there. Some scary stuff. The fact that its fiction doesn’t mean it isn’t scary or that it doesn’t affect us. Most of the stuff out there is ineffable and beyond us. We can only perceive what our filters allow for; we expand our horizon by stepping into the periphery vision. We feel our way into the darkness, waiting for our eyes to adjust. When you start taking ownership of your ability to see, you realize the horizons you once thought were your boundaries never existed. Though we could seriously encounter some scary stuff, most of it may only be scary based on what we know, or think we know. It is also possible

we may not even know enough to be appropriately scared. We will be learning to see, but if you don't look, you will never see. I am more worried about the inexplicable than the sex stuff, because you and I got the sex stuff taken care of."

Loxy blocked Fersia from taking more pomegranate and pushed the bow to Jon. "Eat these, then let's walk."

Chapter 6

The immediate back yard was defined partly by Second Home's shape, and partly by a picket fence and gate that wouldn't hold a dog or cat. A goat might get its head stuck, and there were goats, and sheep, but not near. There was a clothes line and articles of clothing hanging in the sun, caressed by breezes. Just beyond the fence was the garden, and in all the years Jon had been here, it had never been so rich. Alish had given it color and depth and a variety that was beyond him. A synergistic system that helped the whole of it thrive. A typical American, he could name maybe five vegetables, a dozen fruits, but there was much, much more to be seen and eaten. He couldn't name half the meals that were served him, because others had taken over the cooking. The local animals, rabbits and squirrels, they kept out of the garden as if on agreement, with the exception of a few helper animals, taken on by Alish to help her maintain the shape and flow. The further inland you went from second home, the more trees you encountered until you hit the forest proper. From design, the only trees growing on Bliss were fruit bearing trees, or trees with eatable nuts and seeds. In the scattering of trees between forest and house were some new trees, specifically pine trees. Fersia wanted Christmas trees. She now had Christmas trees. And, Jon grudgingly admitted, his world sorely lacked pinecones. Even the squirrels were missing pinecones.

One path led down to the beach, the other went to the other side of the house and up along cliff to its peak, allowing to see the cove, the natural arch of stone that at certain tide levels churned waves, or held a shiny, reflective pool, or darkened sand. Loxy took Jon's arms, they climbed the gentle slope until they reached the peak where they could see beyond the tapering green waters, clear enough to see the sea floor, to darker blues, to black water. Further out at sea, a huge rock jutted up and out of the ocean, and looked more as if it was planted there than was naturally formed, but it was natural in formation, but clearly manipulated by intelligence so that a person could step off a boat and walk a corkscrewed path to the top, or take a lift from the base up, and at the top was an old castle converted to a light house. Jon blinked, taking it in, and its history was suddenly all there for him, but he was pretty sure, this was new. His world was changing because he had invited others to live here.

"Esfir's place is sure coming along," Loxy noted.

"Yeah it is," Jon said.

Loxy tugged on his arm, telling him to sit without telling him to sit, and she sat Indian style, facing him, her knees touching his. She took both his hands in each of her and beamed a smile into his face. There was a pleasant breeze against them, tempering the sun.

"This is going to be fun. Close your eyes," Loxy said.

"I'd rather look at your face," Jon said.

"That would be a distraction," Loxy said.

"Distract me," Jon said, playfully.

"Umm, how far will you let me take that?" Loxy asked.

Jon frowned, and closed his eyes.

"Well, this is not the way to do remote viewing. I am going to have to train you in short hand, so that you write down initial impressions without your consciousness getting in the way,

but I just want to explore a little with you, because it's my opinion, you and I already have this part down," Loxy said. "Now, I have a flower in my pocket..."

Jon opened his eyes. "I thought you didn't want to distract me?"

"Not that flower," Loxy said. "It's a location, on a paper. Technically, it's a location with a temporal component, because you really can't have a place without time..."

"You have a target destination," Jon said.

"Target is so harsh," Loxy said. "I don't want to kill anything."

Jon considered, and he agreed that even though target could be a neutral word, his foundational American paradigm pushed 'target' towards having a charged connotation. "Flower is not neutral," he said. "In fact, I am now channeling Georgia and sex..."

"You want to have sex to clear your head?" Loxy asked.

Jon bit his lip. "Yes, but I am going to decline," Jon said.

"Are you going to tell me about that?" Loxy asked.

"Remind me to wrap my explanation up in a Christmas present so that you can have it in the future," Jon said.

"Oh, that's lovely," Loxy said. "Yes, I know flower is not neutral, and I hear it will likely influence you in a sexual way, but don't you want to bring love and light to the universe, and so if we're going to explore, let's go with flowers!"

"Okay," Jon said. He closed his eyes again. He frowned.

"What?" Loxy asked.

"I can't get off your flower," Jon said.

"You could get off to my flower," Loxy said. "Try focusing... Oh, yes, that feels great." He frowned deeper, and opened his eyes. "This is not going to work."

"It was for me," Loxy said.

"The sex part is going to get in the way of any true work," Jon said.

"Oh, Jon, the sex part is what makes any true work 'work,'" Loxy said. "Even your go to guy Napoeon Hill is referenced saying that all the great leaders and experts had one thing in common, a hyper-inflated libido and that sexual energy was channeled into their work. You have that energy, you're just not focused."

"I was pretty focused," Jon said.

"Oh, I know, I felt it," Loxy said. She kissed him. "It's okay, Jon. We're practicing. We're going to have some misses. That's okay. I mean, Babe Ruth had lots of misses."

"Mistresses?" Jon asked.

"Probably that, too, I don't know, not really a statistic I am tracking. People put too much emphasis on the hook up. Most everyone hooks up, and that is so not the measure of a human's essence, that's just life," Loxy said. She squeezed his hands. "Here, let's put a binding spell on. For the purposes of our protection, and the protection of others, with the expectation of proliferating only love and kindness, any and all sexual experiences during remote viewing exercises, astral traveling, regular dreaming, and or lucid dreaming will only be consensual. If you go there, you were invited by other because they needed magical intimacy. How's that?"

"I like that," Jon said. "So, it's okay to answer the call."

“Yep, so close your eyes;” Jon obeyed. “Feel the pressure of my hand holding yours. Notice as I alternate the amount of pressure from hand to hand. Now, on the count of three, shift... Where are you?”

Jon opened his eyes, surprised.

“That’s interesting...”

“No! Don’t think about it. Don’t think, just answer my question,” Loxy said. “What primary color did you see?”

“Green,” Jon said.

“Oh, cool. Tell me something else, one word,” Loxy said.

“Grass,” Jon said. “But Loxy, I was in a park.”

“You’re jumping ahead,” Loxy said.

“But I have a question,” Jon said.

“Okay,” Loxy said.

“I am clearly here, my eyes are here, but I was in a park, and I have perspective, like I could see a bench near a pond, and there was person sitting on the bench, his back to me, which means I had position and location in the park,” Jon said. “But my eyes are here, so it begs the question, what I am seeing with?”

Loxy thought about it. “I don’t know.”

“Do psychic spies have eyes?” Jon asked.

“I don’t know. Maybe it could be one of our research questions,” Loxy said, mused. “Tell me more about the guy on the bench.”

Jon blinked. “He is wearing a coat, a patch on the right elbow. Oh, he’s smoking,” he said.

“Close your eyes, go closer,” Loxy said. “Go where you can see the front of him.”

Jon closed his eyes. He suddenly gripped Loxy’s hands. “What?”

“I think he sees me!” Jon said.

“Open your eyes,” Loxy said.

“How can he see me? I am not there,” Jon said, not opening his eyes. “He’s speaking. It’s English.”

“What’s he saying?” Loxy asked.

“He wants me to come closer,” Jon said.

“Is he scary?” Loxy asked.

“I am scared,” Jon said.

“Is he scary?” Loxy asked.

“No,” Jon said. “OMG, he’s getting up and coming closer. He’s coming right at me... No, I am not Russian. Why would you ask me that?”

“I didn’t ask you that,” Loxy said.

“No he’s asking me that,” Jon said. “I am speaking to Loxy. No, she’s not an agent. She’s a graduate student.”

“He’s asking about me?” Loxy asked. “Jon?”

Jon found himself immersed in ‘park land.’ The man was looking at him sideways, blowing smoke at him. When he looked sideways, the smoke seemed to outline an invisible ‘Jon.’ When he spoke, he spoke low, as if not wanting to let others know he was talking to

himself. Jon became aware of others in the park. They were duller in appearance. In fact, he tried to focus on them, they were colorless, like looking at people in a 'black and white' movie. It was if the world was colorized, except for the people, minus the man who was smoking, who was perfectly normal in color and perspective.

"So, you're both students? Exploring hypnotic suggestions of psychic exploration?" the man asked. "What university?"

"Safe Haven," Jon said.

"I'm not understanding that," he said. "What's your name?"

"Jon," Jon said.

"What's my name?" he asked.

"I don't know your name," Jon said.

"You're the psychic spy, guess," the man said.

"Mother goose," Jon said.

"Do I look like Carry Grant?" the man asked.

"Sort of," Jon said.

"Where do you get mother goose?" the man asked.

"You asked me your name, I see a white goose," Jon said. "I suppose it could be a duck, but it doesn't really look like a duck, it's neck it's too long."

"How about a swan?" the man asked.

"Why I would I envision a swan?" Jon asked.

"Because my name is Ingo Swann," the man said.

"Oh, I know you!" Jon said.

"How do you know me?" Swann asked.

"I read your books," Jon said. "Loxy, it's Ingo Swann. This is really cool!"

"I wrote books?" Swann asked.

"Oh, maybe I shouldn't be talking to you at this juncture," Jon said, and found himself suddenly back with Loxy. "Show me your flower."

"Okay!" Loxy said, reaching for the button on her skorts.

"No, not that flower," Jon said.

"Oh, yeah," Loxy said, and pulled an envelope out of a pocket. She opened it, clearly the first time. "A random park, Earth, 1976. Duck, duck, goose. Love Janet."

"That's funny," Loxy said.

"You didn't know?" Jon asked.

"No," Loxy said. "I asked Keera to write down a location, nonspecific, and put it in an envelope and bring it back to me, and so she went away and came back with the flower, and said she asked someone else to do it, because she was afraid she might contaminate the experiment..."

"Loxy," Jon interrupted. "Hypothetically, if everyone is psychic, how will we ever eliminate observer-expectancy effect?"

"I don't think we can," Loxy said.

Jon stood, offered Loxy a hand to help her up, and they headed back, Jon leading, holding her hand. "We're going to have to put an arch up here."

निर्मित

The Library at second home was mid cliff level, outside window flat with the cliff side overlooking the beach, while the opposite end was carved out of the cliff rock itself, in a very carefully precise way as to maintain the natural feel of a cave. The cliff rock was basalt, a kilometer of basaltic prisms, and so some of the walls maintained the columns, and where there was a shelf cut into the rock, you had hexagonal square pattern that one automatically assumed it was intelligently made, but indeed, was just a natural formation of lava cooling into some really cool patterns. The excavated material was removed in such a way as to leave tables and chairs, and shelves, and natural curves, so that you weren't going straight back, but you curved into the cliff, as if following a meandering path that was carved by wind and water over eons. The cave was definitely cut, and if asked, Jon denied doing it, and if pressed, he would offer the idea that Jedi Squirrels with Lightsabers performed the work. Some nanite technology was used to 'line' the hexagonal patterns to give them a luminescent edge, and if just the boundaries of the hexagon were lit, you might think this was once a beehive made by cat sized bees. The only natural light came from the large window looking out over the cove, but there was light throughout the artificial cavern, yet, there was no obvious light source, and there were no shadows. The no shadow thing made the library seem unreal, and the uninitiated were always uneasy until they had an explanation. Most people don't notice the lack of shadows, but the brain does because it uses shadows to navigate.

The deepest part of the library ended in a narrow, where one had to turn sideways, which was fun and scary, because it got narrower before it opened back up into a spiral staircase that proceeded down to the 'secret' vault, which really wasn't a secret, and the vault itself, went even further into the earth, going deeper, with levels and sections requiring greater and greater security. Loxy thought maybe they were about to go into the vault, which was always fun, because there were different things to find and explore, and every time they descended, something new was obvious, but he began running his fingers over titles, just beyond the narrow.

"You do know, there is a better way to organize books," Loxy said.

Jon paused. "I like my system," he said.

"Your system is as chaotic as a coffee book store which was shelved by blind volunteers and random, coffee drinkers moving stuff," Loxy said.

"Ha ha," Jon said. "I always know where things are, unless someone moved them..."

"You accuse people of moving them, but really, you just misplaced them," Loxy said.

"More often than not, people move things and don't put them back," Jon said. "And this library has had a lot of hands shifting it lately, and Lester has been trying to impose his own system on my system, and I am getting pretty annoyed with him."

"Oh, he is just trying to help," Loxy said.

"It should be here!" Jon said. "Who would know enough to even come to this section..."

"Jon, you probably just forget where it is," Loxy said. She pushed against the books.

"Books are tight, so nothing is missing..."

Jon sat on the floor to reach the bottom shelves. Loxy sat with him, her back to his shelf, his back to the other shelf. She touched his face. He smiled. "Yes! I know it was here," he said excitedly. He pulled out a book and handed it to her.

'Penetration,' was the title. "Oh, I'm game..." she said.

"Ha ha. It's about aliens living amongst us. California is full of them. So is Texas, oddly enough. Dallas is like a hub," Jon said.

'Psychic sexuality,' was another title, Loxy pulled it off the shelf, and said: "See, I told you that you can't separate sex from being psychic, and spying is always about sex, that's why you can't have a spy movie without someone having sex. It's about intrigue and exploration and..."

"Why do we always talk about sex?" Jon asked.

"You love sex," Loxy pointed out.

"I do," Jon said, musing for a moment before forcing himself to pull the next book out.

Loxy accepted 'Star Fire' with a bemused look. "Do you have 'Men Who Stare at Goats?'" Loxy asked.

"Yeah, but it's history mostly, no real insight into the mechanics of the thing, or how to do it," Jon said.

"That book, 'Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain,' that's the how to book," Loxy said.

Jon stopped his search. "You know about this stuff?"

"Well, I don't know these people like you do, though they're contained in my memory somewhere, because of the echo of your memories, but I have been doing magic a while, and I know it's a right brain activity, at least, on the physical level. We need to rethink that metaphor. The brain is just the filtering system for the mind while we're incarnate," Loxy said. "Ummm. I don't like the metaphor at all. I have to go with the whole, everything is energy, consciousness, and our relationship to external data has to have a context, and present context is us as us, but we aren't limited to this context, and so remote viewing is made possible by your flexibility in perspective and context."

Jon took the books from her and put them back into their place.

"We're not going to read them together?" Loxy asked.

"I am not sure it will be helpful after that, and besides, I have read them, which means you've read them, and maybe it's better you come at it intuitively, because you're right brain," Jon said.

Loxy leaned in and hugged him and kissed him. "Jon, I love you, so much" Loxy said. "I wish you could see all the things about you that I see."

"I want to see what you see," Jon said. "I love you and I am sorry if I don't say it enough."

"You say it every day, with every breath, every look, with every little thing you do," Loxy said. "Come on."

Chapter 7

That night, after a magical dinner out as a group off world, specifically Korean BBQ with Asian folks dressed as their favorite manga characters doing Karaoke in the background. They paid for food they had to cook for themselves in the middle of the table, distributing the samples amongst everyone, and then they wrapped meats in leaves like lettuce topped with slices of pepper and raw garlic. They drank, they laughed, though Jon didn't find himself really rising to full laughter, but he was there, as if he were a witness to a level of joy that was just beyond him. He was content with his people, and yet, he also found himself visiting all the other patrons mentally, and he seemed indifferent to whether other females were with someone or not, by the end of the evening, he had ranked everyone in order of preference, daydreamed longingly about several, practically raped the waitress, who wasn't Korean, but Asian enough that in his dream she simply submitted without any evidence she cared either way, like the Japanese porn where the men are ghost and they're doing the anchor woman who continues to give the news even as she's being molested. Loxy was kind enough to touch him and bring him back to their reality anytime he was away too long. He was grateful, but at the same time, embarrassed he needed so much help. In private, she would remind him this was only evidence of his need to connect with others, exasperated by a society that had limited connection and only allowed males one form of intimacy and no emotions. He wondered about his brokenness, and he wondered if this thing tonight was exasperated by having been compelled not to engage in sex at all, even with his companions, and he had wished he had just stayed home, except the group had insisted he join and they were too powerful alone to resist, so the group was something entirely greater. They returned back to Second Home, and began to wind down for bed. Jon had way too much energy to sleep, so he retired to the living room with a book.

The book got as far as being opened. The words hadn't he even finished arranging themselves on the page when Keera, in an almost knee long t-shirt, plopped herself beside him.

"Not coming to bed?" Keera asked.

"Umm, not yet," Jon said.

"You're being really weird, you know?" Keera said.

"Being Jon," Loxy said, suddenly in front of him wearing a three layer nighty, bringing a glass of tea. "Passiflora incarnate. It will help you relax."

Jon looked skeptically at her, but accepted the mug. Without speaking, she got him to move over towards the middle of the couch by inserting herself on the other side of him, which also forced Keera to shift, but she didn't shift as much as he would have liked for his present level of comfort, and together Loxy and Keera had Jon boxed between them fairly well. Loxy took the book and set it on the coffee table under lamp, on top of the partially eaten dark chocolate. She turned sideways, bringing her knees up, leaning into him. Fersia came bounding happily into the room, a one piece pajama that encapsulated her feet and had a hoodie, and was so tight you had to wonder if it were painted on. She came to stop, her mood shifting to suddenly mad.

"What? You didn't invite me play?" Fersia said.

"We're not playing," Jon said.

“We could play,” Keera said.

“I am holding tea,” Jon advised.

Fersia came closer, in a seductively cat manner. “I love to play.”

Alish came in. “I thought we were retiring for the night,” she said.

“We’re still winding down,” Loxy offered.

Keera patted the seat beside her, and then there were four on the couch, and Fersia sitting on the floor, kneading Jon’s legs.

“Easy with the claws,” Jon said.

“You like it,” Fersia said.

Sabra arrived by magical portal and paused as if to orientate, and bit her lip. She was wearing her Swiss-mountain bar made outfit, her breast exaggeratedly enhanced. “Bad timing?” she asked.

“Great timing,” Fersia said.

“Yeah, join us,” Jon said.

Sabra laughed. “You wish,” Sabra said.

“Why does everyone assume I am suggesting something sexual?” Jon asked.

“Aren’t you?” Fersia asked.

“Well,” Jon stammered. “Not the point...”

“I mean, I will if you insist, I am just not into the whole group at once thing,” Sabra said.

“Oh, how could anyone not love a group love?” Fersia said. “I mean, that’s how we all start, kittens, pushing against each other to stay warm and fed... Nothing greater than group love.”

“That’s interesting,” Sabra said.

“We should watch a movie,” Loxy said.

“Yes!” Fersia said. “Something scary.”

“Nothing scary for you before bed,” Alish said.

“But I want scary,” Fersia said.

“You say that, but then you’re up all night measuring shadows,” Keera said.

“No I am not,” Fersia said.

“How about that crawling eye thing,” Loxy offered.

“Tollenberg movie?” Jon asked.

“Let me get comfortable,” Sabra said.

“Popcorn!” Fersia yelled, springing to her feet.

And eventually, everyone was settled on or near the couch. There was no television in the room, but in the direction the couch was facing a virtual holographic screen was created by Cortana, the home AI, and the movie began to play, with commentary as it went along.

“Jon, are we watching this because of the girl?” Fersia asked.

“If we’re going to make fun of it, we can watch the MST3K version,” Jon offered.

“I am just saying, you like the girl,” Fersia said.

“Of course he likes the girl. When doesn’t he fall in love with the girl,” Sabra said.

“I feel sorry the writers couldn’t give her any better lines,” Jon offered.

“Loxy kind of looks like Janet,” Alish said.

“No, I don’t,” Loxy said.

“All mammals look alike to plants,” Alish said. “I distinguish you by your smells.”
“Oh!” Fersia said, when Anne Pilgrim fell into Alan’s lap. “That’s such contrived Jon scene.”

“How is this a contrived Jon scene?” Jon asked.

“Girls fall in your lap all the time,” Loxy said.

“Why do girls, fall into your lap, every time, you are near...” Fersia sang a new verse of ‘Close to You.’

“I’d like to fall into your lap,” Keera said.

“Me, too,” Fersia said. The character Alan offers Anne his flask. “Oh, what’s in this drink?!”

“Seriously, would you like to watch a newer movie?” Jon asked.

“No,” they all voted.

Further along, Fersia began to complain about the lack of scary elements. “Seriously, I thought this Trolenberg was scary. You know what’s scarier than Trolenberg?”

“Cucumbers?” Jon asked.

Popcorn flew as Fersia jumped up and looked around on the floor like an elephant looking for the mouse, which got some laughter, and anger response from Fersia, and it took Loxy calling her over and petting her to calm her back down.

“That’s not funny,” Fersia said.

“I told you no scaring the cat before bed,” Keera said. “You know how she keeps us up at night.”

“Yeah, Jon, you know how she keeps you up at night which keeps us all up at night,” Alish said.

“I think I will sleep in the spare room tonight,” Jon said.

“You can’t scare me and then not sleep with me!” Fersia said.

“Oh, if only that was a popular female endorsement for sex, I could get lots of sex,” Jon said.

“You’re not scary, and you’re not funny,” Loxy said.

“And you get lots of sex,” Keera said.

“Except today, you haven’t even flirted with your eyes,” Fersia said. “Are you sick?”

“Should we pause the movie?” Alish said.

“No, just let him answer,” Fersia said.

“Let him be,” Loxy said.

“He turned me down today,” Sabra said.

“I made a bet with Trolenberg that I could go a week without,” Jon said.

“That’s scary,” Fersia said.

“That’s mean,” Sabra said.

“That’s impossible,” Keera said.

“We could help him go without,” Loxy said.

“Even if we were handcuffed to him blocking 24 seven, impossible,” Keera said.

“I could sedate you for a week,” Alish offered.

“Oh, if only that were an out,” Jon said, sighing. He made a face at the bitter dregs.
“What’s in this drink?”

“Christmas?!” Fersia said.

“Maybe we should watch Star Trek,” Loxy said.

“Star Trek uniform makes him horny,” Loxy said.

“Oh, let’s watch Star Trek!” Keera said.

“We started this, we need to finish this,” Sabra said. “But I would be willing to finish that...”

“What else is Janet in that you’re so in love with her?” Keera asked.

“Darby O’Gill and the Little People,” Jon offered.

“Oh, I love that movie,” Sabra said. “Sean Connery sings in that.”

“I also like Sebastian,” Jon mused.

“And she was looking pretty hot in ‘The day the Earth Caught Fire,’” Loxy offered.

“Oh, I forgot about that,” Jon said. “Which reminds me of ‘The Cat Women on the Moon,’” Jon said.

“However did you make that leap?” Sabra asked.

“Oh, I want to be a Cat woman on the moon,” Fersia said.

“Jon?” Sabra asked.

“I don’t know,” Jon said.

“Girls in leotards?” Keera asked.

“I love leotards!” Fersia said.

“Probably because someone said Star Trek and the makeup in that kind of looks like Lee Merriweather’s character Losira in episode, ‘That Which Survives,’” Loxy said.

“Still not sure how we got to the moon from Earth,” Sabra said.

“Apollo missions?” Jon offered.

“And since there is no end to Jon’s celebrity crushes, should we really pursue the connection?” Keera said. “They were female, on earth, that’s the connection.”

“Earth girls are easy,” Fersia said. “I am the offspring of Geena Davis and Jeff Goldblum.”

“Surprised Jon isn’t your dad as many crushes as he’s had,” Keera said.

“Well, we’re all related, you know,” Fersia said, endorsing the regional philosophy. “I mean, not physically. Personality is all enmeshed in the collective unconscious, and so it’s like one big kitten orgy sucking on the tit of society.”

Jon appeared to be moping, but he was really just trying to tackle it all.

“Ahh,” Fersia said, feigning fainting, falling into Jon’s lap. Keera took his cup, and Alish took it from her and set it on the side table. “Did I hurt your feelings?”

“Saying truth hurts his feelings?” Keera said.

“He’s not a cat to go boasting of his interests,” Fersia said, pawing Jon’s face as she draped her legs over Keera and Alish caught her feet. “He is so easily embarrassed. We love you, Jon.”

“And we’re all willing to demonstrate it right here right now,” Keera said.

“Fuck,” Jon muttered.

“Okay,” they all agreed.

“No! I am going to decline,” Jon said.

“It doesn’t feel like it’s declining,” Fersia said.

“Off,” Jon said.

“You want me to get you off?” Fersia.

“Yes, no, later, we’ll schedule tomorrow,” Jon said.

“For tomorrow?” Fersia asked. “Like five past midnight.”

“No, I’ll schedule tomorrow for another day,” Jon said.

Fersia sat up and touched his forehead. “You’re not sick?”

“He’s got to be sick,” Keera said.

“I could make it rain,” Sabra said.

“What?” Jon asked.

“So we can all cash in on these rain checks you’re tossing,” Sabra said.

“I am not tossing anything,” Jon said.

“Want me to toss it for you?” Fersia asked.

“Okay,” Loxy said. “Everyone, to bed, now. Alish, tuck them all in, please.”

Fersia protest, put Alish took her by the collar. Keera and Sabra went more willingly, though Sabra did complain they weren’t finishing the movie. Loxy laid her head on Jon’s shoulder, and held his hand. The movie continued, but the sound dropped to preferred Jon level, almost inaudible and subtitles came up.

“You okay?” she asked.

“I will be,” Jon said.

“I think I look more like Barbara Wilson,” Loxy commented. “Definitely not Doreen Denning, but would be okay if you compared me to Audrey Dalton.”

“Oh, Terror in the Midnight Sun, 1959,” Jon said. “Invasion of the Animal People. But truly, you more resemble the actress in ‘Fiends without a Face’ actress, a UK film...”

“Kim Parker?” Loxy asked, a little skeptically. She pushed fingers through hair, taking it off the ear. “I love how you find me in anything and everything.”

“You’re my Universe, how could I not find you in every place I look?” Jon asked.

“I do look really hot in that scene with just the towel on...”

“You make everything look hot,” Jon said.

“Instead of watching these old movies, we should make our own versions,” Loxy offered. “We should really re-work the movie ‘Dark Power,’ make it a little better while keeping some of its campiness.”

“That would be interesting,” Jon said. “Except I wouldn’t want to participate. I don’t like being on film. I don’t like the way I look or even the sound of my voice.”

“I know,” Loxy said, squeezing his hand.

They continued to sit. Fersia bounded into the room to check on them and was told to go back to bed and she went like a child, moping and dragging her feet. The stillness of the room returned and Jon was aware of how much time he had spent here in this particular house alone and this was the longest spell of people and how important this grouping of people meant to him compared to all the past visitors, some of whom hardly spent a season.

“Am I boring?” Jon asked.

“You ask because?” Loxy asked.

“Oh, please don’t go all Rogerian,” Jon said. He turned on the couch so he was facing her. “Am I boring? Do we have enough to talk about?”

“You are the kindest, smartest man I know,” Loxy said.

“That could mean anything from you’re being kind to you’re not getting out enough. It doesn’t answer the question,” Jon said. “Am I boring? I mean, seriously, other than sex, do I offer anything to our relationship? Do we have enough to talk about?”

Loxy took both his hands, also turning to face him on the couch. “We exist in a parallel, temporal anomaly, a sidebar universe that is writing itself from the middle of time outwards to the beginning and the end of time. You and I are foundational, pivotal, and instrumental to the existence of this place. From one perspective, I was not always here, but I was always a part of you, and you were always here. From another perspective, you created me, but you could not have done that without knowing experiencing all you knew prior; you needed experiences with other to fully realize my value. From another perspective, you met me for the first time already in progress. From another perspective, that girl you met was my own creation, bringing you the place and the friends you needed to move to the next level. Even you are not who you think you are, but the trajectory of you is interesting, and it’s managed to get further than most arrows. You’re still flying. We’re still flying, and we may be more than a chapter here, but ultimately, our story is not about us, but that which comes after us. Oh, back to Star Trek. We’ve come full circle. Jon, I love you, my answers about you will always be bias, and you are anything but boring. You just have to look at all the worlds we’ve experienced together to know you’re anything but.”

Jon leaned in and kissed Loxy. There is no end to the types of kisses that can be applied, and Jon decided to sort them all. He spent more time focused on kissing her than he had ever spent, sensing how close he could come without touching, testing how much pressure it took to part her lips. Loxy repositioned her legs to either side of him, and he lifted her up onto his lap, and they continued. Their session went an hour and half, simply exploring kissing, not culminating in sex, and then they slept, spooning on the couch. He woke, kissed the back of her neck and went back to sleep.

निर्मित

At the table the next morning, Jon was practicing the shorthand Loxy had provided for him to master. Memorizing the symbols that stood for common elements, like water, grass, basic terrain stuff wasn’t difficult, but it was monotonous, and it felt like punishment. “I will not draw naked ladies in class...” (Bart Simpson, at the chalkboard.) He complied because she asked, and she wanted it so engrained in his automatic response if she said water and he was holding a pencil, he would simply scratch out the wave sign that Loxy wanted him to use to indicate water. Automatic writing was very similar to this process. From Ingo Swann’s position, remote viewing wasn’t psychic stuff, or even paranormal, but rather was studies in exploration of consciousness. In the old days, science promoted the idea that humans only use ten percent of their brain. That’s not true. We always use a hundred percent of our brain. One can’t turn the brain off. Jon would argue, based on what he knew about brain and the Remote Viewing studies was that humans only use ten percent of their available perception capabilities. People typically go to their core-sight, hearing, and touch... but there was much more available, and one could be trained to tap into that. Ingo Swann’s position was clear: humans are more than the physical body. Jon agreed

with that, was experiencing that on a daily basis, and was even attending an esoteric college, but he had no clue as to what the actuality of reality 'was.' But he wanted to trust his perception.

He threw down the exercise and said "Let me create my own symbols, and then together they worked on that. Loxy would call something out, like 'sun' and the first non-voluntary motion of his hand became the symbol. Sometimes he thought so much on it that they decided to come back to that so that he got automatic instead of forced thought. They built a table of symbols connecting it to common objects and themes, like water being expressed as a quick wave, and mountains and upside down triangle. He began practicing his own table while Loxy took a break.

Loxy put coffee down beside him and touched the back of his neck with a warmed hand. She and Alish had been preparing eggplants for breakfast.

Fersia came bounding into the room and pulled up a chair next to Jon. "I want to color!"

Jon provided her paper. She found a large purple crayon in the art box and exploded upon the paper like a child who couldn't stay in the line, only there were no lines to contain her. Loxy tapped his paper, encouraging him to go back to work.

"This is fun," Fersia said. "I love coloring with you."

Keera arrived, yawning. "Did you two sleep in the spare room?"

"On the couch," Loxy said.

"Oh!" Fersia said. "And you didn't call me."

"It was a tight fit," Loxy said.

"I like your tight fit."

Esfir arrived with a trajectory that suggested she had been out of the house. Loxy hugged her, and Jon was about stand to greet her, but Loxy put her hand on his shoulder to keep him in his chair. Esfir kissed him and went to help herself to coffee and inspect breakfast. Alish hugged her and they began talking.

"What are you writing?" Keera asked Jon.

"My symbols," Jon said.

"Cool. Can you hang this on the refrigerator?" Fersia asked.

"Can you draw something other than a frightened QRST wave form mating with a blob?" Loxy asked.

"Oh!" Fersia said. "If this had come from Suda the Elephant or Koko the Gorilla, you'd be making money off it! But I do it, and I can't even get time on the refrigerator?"

"Fersia," Jon said, taking this from Loxy. "You're an adult... Cat. We expect more from you."

Fersia frowned and stared her work. "It's abstract. In fact, I call it abstraction in purple."

"It is that," Jon agreed. Fersia beamed at her work. "Purple."

"Maybe you'd do better with your remote viewing exercise if you went more abstract," Fersia said.

"The goal isn't to go abstract," Loxy said. "The goal is to make the unknown known."

"Are you sure you want to remote view?" Esfir said, drawing closer.

"Yeah, why not?" Jon asked.

"What you view, also views you," Esfir said.

“Ummm, that would be consistent with the Law of One, we’re all connected,” Jon said. “But that statement isn’t a hundred percent true. I mean, if Fersia knew I was sneaking up on her, what fun would that be?”

“I don’t like when you do that,” Fersia grumbled.

“It’s pretty funny,” Loxy said.

“Anyway, you can open doors you can’t close,” Esfir said.

“You’re not going bring any ghosts back, are you?” Fersia asked.

“Just cucumber ghosts,” Jon said.

“Oh! I am scared,” Fersia said.

Loxy petted her. “Shh, this place is well protected. It has us. We’re a team.”

“You don’t remember that poltergeist movie with the ghost rape scene?” Fersia asked.

“I think you’re mixing movies again,” Jon said.

“You thought it was ghost rape scene, too,” Loxy said.

“It was arousing,” Jon said. “Why do all our conversations go to sex?”

“Because you’re horny?” Esfir asked.

“And I am in heat,” Fersia said.

“You’re always in heat,” Jon said.

“You’re always horny,” Esfir said.

“We’re connected,” Fersia said.

Loxy took the chocolate away from Jon. “You have had enough,” she said.

“Yeah, you’ll get fat like my brother,” Fersia said. “Old men who don’t get sex get fat.”

“You’re not having sex?” Esfir asked.

“It’s called pussy abuse,” Fersia said. “I should call animal protection.”

“I am not abusing you,” Jon said.

“Want to?” Fersia asked.

“I haven’t finished my coffee yet,” Jon said. “Esfir, you clearly have a story. Want to share?”

Esfir found a chair and joined the table. Loxy asked her to wait on her story and took up the art supplies and paper, with a small protest from Fersia who wasn’t ready to switch activities, and then helped Alish serve breakfast, an eggplant, egg, and pseudo sausage, with crumbly flakes that were like bacon bits, only not, and Alish wouldn’t say what it was, but everyone agreed it was great. As they ate, the small talk evolved into Esfir’s story.

“The Russian psychic spy program goes back way before the 70s and Nina Kulagina,” Esfir said. She went on to tell the tale of old ‘royalty,’ and their desire to remain hidden but in control, and they had been harnessing occult powers from the early days. Esfirs’ great grandmother was Romanian, a natural psychic gypsy, and a former son of a Czar who was so impressed with her abilities, and her looks, had her kidnapped; He bred her like a dog with a men who he also knew to be a natural psychics, as well as himself. He concluded that since his children weren’t psychic, but the offspring of a coupling of two psychics were, then it must be a genetic trait. The great grandmother didn’t raise the children, but were instead nurtured and raised by the son of the Czar who wanted to ensure his loyalty with them. This same man later discovered that psychic abilities could be conferred through or activated during sex, and so he began to practice elaborate sex rituals with not only other women he perceived as psychic, but

even his own children. As they approached the seventies, another faction interested in exploring psychic capabilities, discovered him and his group, and secret war games emerged to determine if psychics could kill other psychics, or anyone for that matter, and though they believed it possible, the psychics refused to kill each other, showed a reluctance to harm anyone, even animals, even at the threat of their own demise. The son of the Czar felt his life was endangered, and when he, and those in his employ, wasn't able to kill the 'enemy,' he opened a portal to another realm and allowed something malevolent into the world. Now that entity had no qualms about killing and many people died before it was contained and sent back. A secret military, black op like the US Stargate, killed the son, and his male offspring, but took the females, women and children. They were taken by the government to secret locations to test the extent of their abilities. "My mother and grandmother would likely be labeled with PTSD today, and maybe DID, and Stockholm syndrome... as my mother 'befriended' a general in order to preserve her own mother's life. I am the result of that union. Mother and I were chipped so we could be found by my father anywhere in the world. You might think, why chip us if we were locked away in a top secret, underground base, but the thing is, there is no base that the 'others' can't get you. If that wasn't weird enough, this is where aliens enter the picture. We began being abducted not just by other spy programs, but by aliens. And if aliens want to abduct you and study you, by God, they will. Grandmother, mother, and I have been abducted multiple times. And out of spite or just because they could, but more likely because they didn't understand the nuance of returning a person to the precise location, they would return us not to where they got us, but to other places in the world with amnesia, and usually, three to four days later, someone would show up, collect us, and bring us back to father.

"So, yeah, I see you practicing something that they made us do, and I'm experiencing fear," Esfir said.

Esfir said all of that, summarizing and generalizing, but left out incredibly important details as to her personal, direct experience. Jon was puzzling through that even as Loxy was commiserating with her.

"Jon, do you agree?" Loxy asked.

"Uh," Jon asked, coming back.

"See, Jon is a natural. Whether he is guided or not, he is always traveling," Loxy said. "Your story provoked him to go there. Don't you think it would be better use of his energies if we guide his experience?"

"We're all learning magic," Fersia said. "Is there really a difference between practices?"

"There is no way not to engage in magic," Loxy said. "Because it's all consciousness. So, even if you convince yourself there is no magic, you have just engaged in a form of magic to block abilities. It's called denial"

"That doesn't sound right," Esfir said. "Just denying something doesn't mean something doesn't exist. No, yes. Let me figure out how to say that..."

"Esfir," Jon said. "If you ever want to talk about your childhood, or your experiences, I would be happy to listen to you. I am of course interested in the details, but more important, I am interested in you. There are so many games being played on Earth, I find it difficult to make conclusion to how much you and your family were being manipulated, and by whom, but it sounds extremely convoluted. I say that not to invalidate your experience. I can imagine bad, and

I think it was worse than you're saying, but here is the only way I know how to box this. Let's say, we have a discovered a television. We figure out how to turn it on, and the first thing we see is a horror movie. If we conclude that television is bad because the first thing we channeled was a horror movie, and opt out of television, we're going to miss some really good movies and educational programs and family shows and comedies. Do the bad things and fearful things exist? Absolutely. The Universe is a big place. You will always find what you expect."

"Oh, I like that," Loxy said. "We should make a version of the movie, 'The God's Must Be Crazy,' only instead of a coke bottle, people find an Ipad with movies and books."

"That would be a story," Jon said.

"The God's Must Be Crazy?" Alish asked.

"A movie," Loxy said.

"Another reality," Jon said.

"Another lens to viewing reality," Loxy said.

"A meme," Jon said.

"You speak in memes," Loxy said.

"Let me guess, you look like the heroine?" Fersia asked.

"Come to think of it... No," Loxy said. "I would say, I am more a Jennifer Agutter, wouldn't you Jon?"

"Wearing what you're wearing today, fairly Logan's Runnish," Jon said.

"Let's remake that," Loxy said.

"Let's just watch the original," Jon said.

"Movie night tonight again tonight!" Keera said.

"It's not a movie night unless people get laid," Fersia said.

"You really need to fix your kitty," Esfir said.

"Oh!" Fersia said.

"She means give kitty a fix," Loxy translated.

"Oh!" Fersia said.

"Maybe tomorrow," Jon said.

"Take my cone off, I'll fix myself," Fersia said.

Jon almost choked on coffee. "Fuck," he said, Loxy pounded on his back.

"You could watch," Fersia offered.

"I will help you out after I wash the dishes," Loxy said.

Fersia immediately began gathering dishes to be washed. Fersia leaned into Jon, "You could watch that, too." She ran the dishes to the sink and came back for more. Dishes gathered, she began washing dishes.

"You okay?" Esfir asked.

"Some doors can't be closed," Jon complained.

Loxy whispered in his ear. "We'll make up for this when you're done with whatever this is." And she went to help with the dishes.

"What did she say?" Keera asked.

"You should really learn to remote hear," Jon said.

"Ummm, I feel left out," Keera said.

"You could come watch me and Loxy?" Fersia offered.

“Best offer all day,” Keera said. “Unless you got something...”

Jon couldn't come up with a response. She dragged a hand over him as she, too, went to help with the dishes.

“I don't think I ever saw the dishes done faster,” Alish said.

“I have dishes at my house that need doing, if you like?” Esfir said.

“Cat nip?” Fersia asked.

“If you like,” Esfir said.

“How come if I dose another human, that's wrong, but it's okay to dose the cat?” Jon asked.

“You don't have to dose me to do me,” Fersia said. “It's just loads more fun on catnip. Very trippy and Oh! What's in my drink?!”

“You're not going to let that go, are you?” Jon asked.

Chapter 8

Jon found himself late for class. Frito was prominently displayed on the desk. He looked like your average goldfish, but Jon saw the angry goldfish from 'cat in the hat,' and was thinking he shouldn't be here while the mother was out... And then it occurred to him, all he saw of the mother was her legs as she returned, and that she had good legs, and now he was horny again, and hating this class. When a cartoon art makes you horny, you know you need sex.

"Or you're a human male," Frito said in his head.

"Fuck, you're in my head?" Jon asked out loud.

The fellow students looked at him, not privy to the conversation.

"You're in mine. Hell, you get hard just examining the holes in the donuts," Frito said.

"At the moment, I am wondering what it's like to push it in a goldfish mouth," Jon said.

"Try it," Frito said. "I'll try not to bite it off."

"You may end up biting off more than you can chew," Jon said.

"You wish you were that big," Frito said.

"Seriously, what's it like gumming a big dick," Jon asked.

"I have teeth," Frito said, smiling. "And I also know you were thinking what it would be like to fuck a sea anemone, but I promise you, you don't want to put your dick in that."

"If I fucked an anemone, would the offspring be an anomaly?" Jon asked.

"Got sex on the brain, do you?" Frito asked.

"The more you don't have it, the more you think about it," Jon said.

"You were thinking about it even after you had it, and aroused by every strange that walked by? Seriously, can you let a woman on the street pass you without you undressing her?" Frito asked.

"Sometimes," Jon said. "Variable dependent..."

"Jon, if you have seen one pussy, you've seen them all," Frito said.

"Fuck, that doesn't make any sense," Jon said. "Going with that, I could say 'seen one flower, you've seen them all, but that doesn't stop people from buying more roses. Hell, I think I will use that argument the next time a girl says why are you looking for strange, mine not good enough? What was wrong with that first rose I gave you, you want another? In fact, I think I gave you a dozen, and you prefer a dozen to one, so shouldn't I do a dozen to one?"

"Get your fucking mind out of the gutter and teach the class," Frito said.

Jon did a double take. "What?"

"I need you to teach the class," Frito said.

"It's your class, you teach it," Jon said.

"They can't hear me," Frito said.

"Sounds like a problem," Jon said. "Maybe your class is boring."

"Don't make me fin slap you," Frito said.

"I love butterfly kisses. Bring it," Jon said.

"Jon, we will sit here for eternity if you don't give today's lecture," Frito said.

"Nothing could be longer than last class. Where's Lester?" Jon asked.

"Do I look like Lester's keeper?" Frito asked. "You're his roommate."

"He's my roommate," Jon corrected.

“So, where is he?”

“Fuck if I know,” Jon said. “No, more specifically, let me fuck, and maybe I will find him.”

“At the other end of your dick?” Frito asked.

“We’re not partners,” Jon said. “He’s just a guy friend, who’s really not a direct friend, but a friend of friends, and so, he just part of a package deal, like the Lego character you really didn’t want, but you bought the whole set, because it’s the only way to get the original Gredo, and no matter what you do you can’t get rid of that other guy.”

“You don’t like him?” Frito asked.

“The other guy? No, he’s a bit creepy, and has two faces, and no matter which face you hide under the helmet hair, you’re still a little creeped by the visible face, but you’re also disturbed by the fact you know there is another face,” Jon said.

“I am talking about Lester,” Frito said.

Jon blinked. “Oh. He’s alright. I wouldn’t have picked him for a friend, because he’s mostly annoying, except, interestingly enough, in a pinch. If you’re in need, he proves himself useful, and he is loyal, as long as there is no money or gems involved. He definitely won’t try and steal your girl, not that I am worried about that, but otherwise he has no problems cheating you, and he considers it as doing you a favor, like he’s teaching you a lesson. In fact, I can see him selling ice cream to kids and short changing them and telling them ‘I am helping you improve math skills.’”

“And he’s punctual,” Frito said.

“Yes. I like that about him,” Jon said.

“So, he’s loyal, never late, and you don’t find it the least bit interesting that he isn’t here?” Frito asked.

Jon nodded, grudgingly. “I should go look for him,” he said.

“After the class,” Frito said.

“You just convinced me something’s wrong, and you don’t want me to rush off and take care of it?” Jon asked.

“You waited this long; if he was dying, he’s probably dead by now,” Frito said.

“OMG, what if it’s a slower death and I find him at the nick of time?” Jon asked.

“That would suggest you are magician of very high caliber, who needs to complete my class,” Frito said.

“What if is he is dead?!” Jon asked.

“The world goes on, teach the class,” Frito said.

“I can see him dead, alone in his apartment, but because no one likes him, he isn’t discovered for like weeks, and his body bloated and exploded painting the walls and there are maggots all over the house...” Jon said.

“Are you channeling or using your imagination?” Frito asked.

“I don’t know!” Jon said.

“Do you have a handler?” Frito asked.

“Ummm,” Jon sorted, wondering if he meant Loxy as his new remote viewing partner. Maybe she could help him locate Lester through all the noise. “Until this class I was be handled. Hope to be so again.”

“That’s a great plan,” Frito agreed. “Now, back to class.”

“But,” Jon began.

“Jon, Lester is a magician. He can sort himself,” Frito said.

“But you...”

“Was just checking to see if you cared,” Frito said. “You’re here now and you’re the only one who can hear me, so, let’s get to it.”

“What if Lester’s in a time trap, like Batman, and he’s in a bottle slowly filling with sand...”

“Great imagination,” Frito said. “Now, translate. As magicians, words have power...”

“Hey, class. The professor has asked me to stand in for Lester. Words are meaningful, Jon began.

“No, Jon, I want you to repeat things back verbatim,” Frito said.

Jon looked at Frito. “We’re on Safe haven.” Frito said bubbled a yes. “Regardless of language, people hear things in their native language, so...”

“Jon, words are important...”

Jon became distracted by a student raising his hand, and Frito’s rant diminished in the background, like a Charlie Brown adult.

“Where’s Lester?”

“We just did that bit, weren’t you listening?!” Jon asked.

“Are you yelling at me?” she began to cry.

“What did I say?” Jon asked.

“Jon!” Frito broke through. “Focus. Say what I say.”

“Class, we don’t know what’s going on with Lester, and I have been asked to speak for the professor,” Jon said.

The class protested. One wanted to leave because this wasn’t what he signed up for. He was a Lester groupie. The girl Jon raised his voice at cried louder. Several of the class speculated what happened to Lester, and their imaginations were even wilder than Jon’s. One asked Jon why he had been standing there for hours before speaking. The crying girl asked, “so I have to sleep with you, too?”

“What?” Jon asked.

“Lester said I had to sleep with him, and he made me wash the dishes in the morning,” she said.

“Lester slept with you? At my place?”

“Is your place the Ivory Tower?” she asked.

“You had sex with him in Ivory tower?” Jon asked.

“No,” she began to cry. “All he did was sleep.”

“I wanted that job,” the other classmate said.

“Stop!” Jon snapped. He held his head, it was hurting. Everyone stopped speaking.

“Sorry. I am new to this. If you want to speak, raise your hands. Seriously, all of you at once is too much, and no that wasn’t a sexual connotation, why are you thinking about sex, OMG, don’t think that, yes, I like it, and...” Jon turned to Frito and said out loud. “What the fuck?!”

“Are you to ready to do it my way?” Frito asked. “Say what I say.”

“Go,” Jon said, sitting on the desk.

“That’s Lester’s seat...”

Jon pointed a warning. “Next person who speaks without raising their hand and being acknowledged will be publicly disparaged,” he said. “You, stop crying.”

She stopped and went back to happy normal self which had Jon thinking she was a Lego person with two heads, and now he wanted to run his fingers through her hair to see the other side.

“Jon, stop thinking about sex and focus,” Frito said.

Jon rubbed his head. “Stop thinking about sex and focus,” he repeated.

She raised her hand.

“Yes, um...”

“Audrey,” she said. “You want to have sex with me?”

“I want to have sex with everyone, it doesn’t mean what you think it means,” Jon said.

He pointed at the guy raising his hands. “No. Only a female. And a few trans, post op... No more questions. OMG, this is hard. No! No more questions. Words have power. You’re magicians. Or will be, when you grow up. I am going to give you six words. The most powerful words in any magician’s tool box. I am going to give them to you in a very precise order, a neutral order, and you will commit them to memory, in this order. Saying them in any other order results in magic.”

Audrey raised her hand. Jon closed his eyes. “Audrey?”

“Only six words? You can make magic with only six words?”

“There’s like what, three particles, and you can make up a whole Universe with that,” Jon said.

“Why six?” someone asked without raising his hands.

“Because forty two is really hard to memorize,” Jon said. “Seriously, try reading the Thai alphabet. Stop. Look, this is really hard for me, OMG stop it, and I need your patience and understanding, and raise your damn hands, but do it after I say what I have to say...” Jon sighed. “These seemingly harmless words can make up phrases that when uttered can make people have sex with you, heal them, hurt them, curse them, or even blow up a planet that you’re standing on, killing everyone and everything on that planet, and soul-bound them to you. In the latter instance, you don’t even have speak the words out loud, you merely have to think it, and the world is yours...”

Jon stopped. He looked to Frito. Frito looked back. “Problem?”

“I am not giving them those words,” Jon said.

“They’re magicians. They can handle it,” Frito said.

“I can’t handle it. I don’t want to know,” Jon said.

“But you’re a magician. You need to know these words have power,” Frito said.

“I believe you, but if there’s an arrangement of those words that can blow up a planet by just thinking of them, then I don’t want that,” Jon said.

“Don’t trust yourself?” Frito asked.

“I can’t go through an hour without thinking of sex, and if I even walk past a strange female in public, regardless of level of attractiveness, which is proportional to how long it’s been since I had sex, I am thinking of bedding her, and you want give me six words that can not only make her fuck me whether she originally intended to or not, but can also be arranged to get rid of the evidence by killing everyone else, and binding them to me so I can continue having sex with

their ghosts, yeah, I don't want those words, in order or not, because even though I don't consider myself evil, I am not so disciplined in my thoughts, and I guarantee you, if I don't get sex before the end of this week, I would soul-bound Safe Haven just to get some action, even if it's ghost action, cause seriously, naked in the wind would get me off at the moment. So, fuck, where was I, oh, six words! I don't want them. I don't want that kind of power. Just knowing there is an arrangement would have sorting for the arrangement, just out of curiosity..."

"I'll give you the arrangement," Frito said.

"Are you fucking nuts?!" Jon said. "How can you give me the arrangement without me thinking of it? Hell, even if you could, you're guaranteed to put me on a track of thinking it, and even if I became a monk and permanently quieted the monkey chatter in my brain, what if I thought it in a dream?"

"You would soul bound the dream," Frito said.

"I don't want the words. Even if I avoided saying or thinking the phrase, I would not be able to keep them secret. I suck at secrets. I am flibbertigibbet and you get me angry or scared and I start spitting words out. And if someone took me hostage and even intimated that they were going to hurt me, I'd be like, here, have these six words, and I don't want that!" Jon said.

"Seriously? I think you're over reacting," Frito said.

"How am I over reacting?!" Jon asked.

"You've been very emotional ever since you came into the classroom," Frito said.

"I am sure that has nothing to do with the fact that I am horny," Jon said.

"You want to have sex with me?" Frito asked.

"No, but I do want sex," Jon said. He wasn't even looking at her, and someone might have said he saw her reflection in Frito's bowl: "Lower your hand, Audrey. Frito, I don't want the words, and I don't want them having it."

"Why would you deny them the words?" Frito asked.

"Well, for starters, they can't get them unless I learn them to give them, and I am saying no to knowing, but even if I knew the words, I don't want them having that kind of power over people," Jon said. "And, no, wait wait wait. There's a language spell involved in translating. If you give me the words, want they lose power in translation."

"I love that question. Great question. You're curious," Frito said.

"Yes, no, wait. I am curious about the translation thing, not curious about the actual words," Jon said.

"They're true words. It doesn't matter how they're spelled or how they're pronounced, or how you think they're pronounced, they are true regardless of culture, or language, or gender, or age, or species," Frito said.

"Well, that can't be true," Jon argued.

"Yes it can," Frito said.

"You do know a contradiction isn't an argument," Jon said.

"It could be," Frito said.

"OMG, stop it. Take the word love. The original translation of the bible had four different words for love, and if you use the wrong word, it changes the meaning of things," Jon said.

Frito bobbed. "That's true. And your people who translated it to make it politically correct have removed true words, rendering what was probably true into something that is to be

very unlikely. But that's not about the words as much as the people controlling the words. See, you got this."

"No I don't! The only reason I know bible stuff is because I was born in Texas, and one side of the family was Baptist, and the other side Church of Christ, and our neighbors were Jehovah Witnesses, and everyone on the street thought the other ones were going to hell, and that was one hell of a hot mess, people shooting at each other over it, and, fuck, why are we going here. I don't want the words, and I don't want anyone else having the words, because, by god, if you gave it to my folks or anyone in my trailer park origin, you'd be liable for murder!" Jon said.

Frito bobbed. "If I might translate, because you grew up with some people who were wanting power and dominance, you think that if you gave everyone a button to blow up the world, someone would push it?"

"Absolutely!" Jon said. "Mature people don't do that."

"Don't you want everyone being equal?" Frito asked.

"Fuck that. I am not giving everyone a button to blow up the world. There are kids. There adults with questionable faculties. There are people with diminished cognitive ability, where that is biological, or lack of nutrition, or from sniffing paint, and there are people who want revenge, and regardless of the validity of their claims, people wanting vengeance don't care who they hurt to get theirs, which is what keeps the cycle of violence going, and... Fuck, I don't want these words and I don't want anyone else having these words. Can I be any clearer on this?"

"Jon," Frito said. "You already have the words."

"What?!" Jon asked.

"The six words. They're already in your vocabulary," Frito said. "Everyone past the age of puberty have these words at their disposal even before they reach puberty; puberty just gives it power. Even other species have these words. Cat's don't just have the power of three names, they know the words and the all the permutations of the words, which really shows you just how wonderfully reserved cats can be, and you'd be wise not to cross them."

"You're telling me that I have words at my disposal right now that could make someone, anyone, fuck me or blow up the world?" Jon asked.

"Yes. Everyone does," Frito said. "And as magicians, it is my position you should know the words."

Jon sorted, his eyes closed, bouncing a 'stop' gesture. "Are you saying..."

"Yes," Frito said. "Think about it, Jon. Every time you convinced someone to have sex with you, whether you were speaking truth or not, you were using true words. Wouldn't you like to know these words so the next time you ask a stranger for sex, wouldn't you like to know you're using the words in an arrangement that allows the person to agree to having sex as opposed to being manipulated into sex because of a spell?"

"I could, in theory, accidentally say the words that blow up worlds?" Jon asked.

"Oh, sure, theoretically, you could, anyone could, but in terms of probability, not likely," Frito said. "Think about all the angry, hungry people on your world of origin alone. If it were more likely it would have already happened."

"Or it did happen and I am already someone's soul bound," Jon said.

"Infinite loop/regression, the Banach-Tarski paradox, matryoshka doll, living on the surface of a black hole, which has a hole, inside a hole, inside... and so, if you ever get déjà vu,

well, it's because we've done this all before as we fall for eternity through cyclic holes..." Frito said. "It's not random thing, Jon. Not like the universe choosing lottery numbers. The words have bias in every language that increases the odds of putting them together in dangerous ways, which means most people, are really good people. You should come over on Thursday night. I host a dinner for a few select magicians and mathematicians and we talk about this stuff all the time."

"You're a Last Thursdayist?" Jon asked.

"No, but we talked about that last Thursday," Frito said.

"My head hurts," Jon said.

"Now that you know you know the words, don't you want to really know the words?"

Frito asked.

"No," Jon said. "I lived this long without knowing that I know, I think I can go the rest of my life not knowing."

"Can you?" Frito asked.

"Yes," Jon said.

"Jon. Think about this. You're an immortal being. You don't die," Jon said. "You will eventually know that you know."

"Well, then, I will be reincarnated and induce amnesia," Jon said.

"That's how most beings cope," Frito said. "Don't you want more for your life?"

Jon became tearful. "I am not good enough."

"You're better than you think," Frito said.

Jon looked at his feet. Frito allowed him his silence. When Jon came out of thoughts, he met the eyes of his class. "Imagine for a moment, everyone in existence has a button, they can push that at any time and destroy their word. Let's say you have it, even now. But no one know they have it, and the button can only be triggered if you knew, would you want to know?"

No one raised their hand.

"I don't understand. Raise your hands if you want to know?" Jon said.

No one raised their hands.

"Raise your hands if you don't want to know," Jon said.

They all raised their hands.

Jon turned to Frito. "No one here wants to know," he said.

"What if I told you that none of you will graduate unless you know the words?" Frito said.

"Then I chose not to graduate," Jon said.

"Do they?" Frito asked.

"I am going to spare them the angst of deciding. I am deciding for them," Jon said.

"What if told you, if you don't learn these words, each of your worlds of origin will receive a mass email informing the entire population the secret of the six words," Frito asked.

"Do it," Jon said. "If they blow the world up it won't because I did or didn't do something. It will be on you for pushing send."

"No, Jon, it will be on you, and your classmates," Frito said. "No one comes to Safe Haven University because of merit. You were recommended. People voted you to be the ones to carry the secret. It's a terrible a secret. It's a burden. It can drive some people mad. I know this

much, though, none of you would be in my class if you didn't have the integrity, the compassion, the wisdom to carry this. We all know, but not everyone knows they know, and this class is about revealing what you don't know that you know."

"Even that's convoluted," Jon snapped.

"Yes. There are seven of you. There are six words. I will allow you to give one word to each of your peers and we will go a spell and see how you managed with the weight of one," Frito said.

"But I will know all the words?!" Jon asked.

"Yes," Frito said. "Once they have the one word, you will never be allowed to visit in public together as a group. In fact, you will find doing so quite impossible, as the Universe itself will compel the limitation of your meeting to just this classroom."

"But I won't have the luxury of avoiding myself," Jon said.

"You will not," Frito said. "Why do you think it is so hard for me to get interns?"

"Fuck. Is that why Lester is your intern?" Jon asked.

"He knows," Frito said.

"Fuck," Jon said, closing his eyes and sorting. "He's a better man than I cared to speculate."

"Jon, you're his friend because you can say 'no,' to him, and that's always been the better measure of a friendship than people who kiss your ass," Frito said.

"Yeah, but I was saying 'no' before I knew he could say six words and blow everything up and or soul bound us to himself," Jon said.

"Yeah, but I bet you can still say 'no,' even though you know," Frito said.

"Until he knows that I know, and then he will take my 'no's' as a challenge," Jon said. "Fuck me."

"I don't think he will fuck you," Frito said.

"That's the whole thing, though, right, because he will know that I know, and if he asks me to blow him, and I say 'no, go fuck yourself,' he's going to say I will just blow the world up and you will still end up blowing me so, why don't you blow me now and be done with it. Be sure to swallow," Jon said.

"Yeah, but you will know the words, too, and so peace through mutually assured destruction," Frito said.

"Except he won't know that I know," Jon said.

"Except you're teaching my class, so he will know that you know," Frito said.

"He will assume that I know, which isn't knowing, but the moment I don't say 'no,' he's going to know that I know something, even if it's just one word, which won't defend against six words, unless each word contains elements of the six... Oh, fuck me..."

"See, you know more than you think you know," Frito said. "String of Pearls. Holographic theory. Everything contains everything else. It's all connected. You can't not know, even if you convince yourself that not knowing is knowing without knowing."

"I don't think I like you," Jon said. "Fuck! I've arrived full monty in a Monty Python script."

"Consider Thursday nights an obligation until this course is over," Frito said. "Now, back to class. The words are..."

Chapter 9

Knowing magic doesn't mean magic makes your life better or enhanced. If you had a choice between Magic and a Super Alexa, Jon would go with the latter, even though when you start adding super to things it means you've gone beyond sophisticated programming into the realm of sentience. He was back on the square and it was just as busy as the last time he was here, if not busier, with loads of things to do, and lots of interesting people to see, as if he arrived at Scarborough Renaissance Festival in Waxahachie, Texas, only this Renaissance covered a large chunk of time, and was more fitting to be called a Cosplay Convention, the kind where people were coming dress as favorites and as people no one had ever heard of to see if they could get a movie deal. It seemed that most of the people were Steam Punk versions of characters and, of course, Jon was distracted by the females enough that when he finally got his brain working his feet in the right direction, he turned and passed through someone.

"Sorry, pardon me," the person said. He was dressed as a knight. A steam punk night.

Jon turned to the ghost. "What the hell."

"I said sorry. Oh, sorry, I think I was supposed to say 'Ni,'" he said. "Name's Jack. Could you direct me towards the giants?"

"You just walked through me!" Jon said.

"I said sorry. You're not going to blast me, are you? I checked my weapons at the gate because this a Safe Place," Jack said.

"Are you a ghost?" Jon asked.

"No, but that would be really cool. Are you a ghost? You're pretty old for a ghost, but then, you would think most ghosts would be old. I don't recognize your outfit. Paramilitary, hints of Star Trek, who are you?" Jack asked.

"Jon Harister," Jon said.

"OMG!" Jack said. "I am Ough. Jack Ough. I am like you're biggest fan! Like, I love you more than Hugh Hefner, and between me and my great grandfather, we collected every issue of Playboy, including the secret Playboy Anime, which is how I found you, because his daughter's a fan of your work, and she devoted a line to you..."

"Stop," Jon said. Jack stopped, biting his lower lip as if he might cry. "How old are you?"

"Old enough to read Playboy. My parents said that's the only safe sex, and they bought me this toy called the flesh light, and so between P. A. and gaming, I hardly ever leave my room," Jack said.

"That's kind of sad, Jack," Jon said.

"Why would I want to leave my room? Parents are in their cell-phone world, and my friends are all in their own text worlds, and well, here I am," Jack said.

"Yeah, tell me more about that," Jon said.

"Oh, well, once a year, Safe Haven University is opened for magical, virtual tours, linking almost all virtual simulations through a secret Easter egg portal, and I was playing the P. A., and in the game there was this other game, Seymour Butts, which opened the eggs, and let me come here, and I am on a quest to slay giants, but before I can find that portal, I have to complete this scavenger hunt, and I just won this Jinn by throwing a ping pong ball into a Goldfish bowl," Jack said, pulling a small sandwich bag out of his pocket that contained a

Goldfish. Jon thought he heard the words, ‘kill me, kill me now...’ “It’s looks like a Goldfish, but it’s really a powerful Jinn ally, because you don’t want to go slaying giants alone, you need friends, want to go?”

“No!” Jon said. He had an epiphany. Frito was Topsy father! “Don’t kill giants, Jack.”

“Not really going to kill them. I just want to see if I could bed one,” Jack said. “I got a thing for giants. And voves. Want to go with me?!”

“I am not sure it’s legal for me to hang out with you,” Jon said. “But thank you so much for asking.”

“Are you okay?” Jack said. “I am sorry if I did something wrong.”

“Sorry, Jack, you did nothing wrong. I am just bit distracted of late and...”

“Can I meet Loxy?” Jack asked.

“Um, no,” Jon said.

“Keera?” Jack asked.

“No,” Jon said.

“How about Fersia?”

“You just like me because of my friends,” Jon said.

“That’s not true. I dream of being you just like I dream of being Kimihito, cause OMG, who wouldn’t want to be Kimihito, unless I can be Jon-Kimihito in that triple X-rated anime, parallel Universe series you put out, because that’s like Kimihito on steroids with all the heroines from all the manga and anime showing up at the sorority party, because finally an anime earned it’s x-rating... not that I do drugs, but if it’s okay with you, if I can’t meet your friends, I would like to go finish my quest,” Jack said.

“Have fun,” Jon said.

“It would be more fun if it was in person, because sometimes these gaming cut scenes are just a big tease,” Jack said. “If it weren’t for my toy which I am hooked up to even now, I’d have some serious blue balls coming here...”

“By, Jack,” Jon said. “Off you go.”

Jack said. “Oh, a kissing booth. I Need to collect kisses. Hope their chocolate...”

And like a kid with ADHD, Jack was gone, bouncing over the landscape like a rabbit, or like Minecraft guy stuck in jump mode, or like a guy riding a stick horse, which was the craziest thing because it looked like an adult riding a stick horse, and there is just something not right about an adult male riding a stick horse in public. Probably less right for that going in private, but then, Jon factored in this was clearly a kid. He really liked the kid’s parents buying him sex toys, as that clearly meant they were sex positive, and they wanted to keep their kid safe, educated, and well, entertained. If he ever did a commercial, it would be for advocating toys for girls and boys, because seriously, this stereotype against males using toys is just wrong. He had a flashback to the Harry Potter toy vibrating broom and how his sisters would beat him up to take it from him. He wondered what happened to the inventors and marketers of that toy...

He turned to find his way to the gate, avoiding further contact, passed the kiosk with goldfish lined up on tiered tables and people trying to throw ping pongs at it, and the fish were actively rejecting the balls being thrown at them, and one of them yelled ‘help us’ to Jon, who hurried on to the gate. He touched it to orientate and said aloud “Take me to Lester.”

Jon passed through the gate and arrived in a classroom and Loxy rushed him and hugged him.

“You’re late.”

Jon looked past the hug to see Professor Shackelford. He looked past the professor to see a furry that resembled a Doctor Seuss character. Seuss guy waved at him, and the blond beside him, also looking very Seussian, winked.

“Um,” Jon said.

Loxy took his hand and led them to their seats.

“Now, let’s begin...”

“Is Lester here?” Jon asked.

“Why would Lester be here?” Loxy asked.

“I haven’t seen him since he and I last had sex,” Shackelford said.

“Just like a guy,” Blue said, lamentingly.

“That’s such a stereotype,” Jon said.

“When’s the last time you were at the Safe Haven Library?” Blue asked, reminding him of the last time he had seen her.

“Ummm,” Jon stammered.

“Oh, you hooked up with Blue?!” Loxy said. “So did I!”

“Who hasn’t?” Posh said. The girl next to him gave him a crossed look. “What?! I needed my library card stamped.”

“Wait a minute,” Jon said. “I didn’t get my library card stamped.”

“You didn’t ask,” Blue said.

“Well, I am asking now,” Jon said.

“Sorry, come again,” Blue said.

“Can we focus on class,” Shackelford said.

“No,” Jon said. “Lester is missing and may be in trouble and I have not had sex now for like... God! It’s been so long I can’t even track it.”

Shackelford chuckled, mischievously. “Would you like some help with that?”

“Finding Lester? Absolutely,” Jon said.

“Nice deflection. Let’s discuss the elephant...” Philomena said.

“No, leave the nice elephant alone, and focus on me,” Jon said.

“Aren’t you the elephant?” Loxy asked.

“Because it’s all about you,” Shackelford said.

“Usually,” Loxy said. “But I was referring to...”

“Yeah, let’s start another rumor...”

“Not a rumor,” Loxy, Shackelford and Blue said.

Posh did a double take off his partner.

“Look, I am sorry, though I can see an argument that it’s all about me, and maybe wanting to find Lester to affirm his wellbeing is also about me and not necessarily true altruism, it is my life and my life is about me, except, in this instance, it’s about Lester, cause it’s out of character for him to miss class, and miss meals, and miss opportunities to take pock shots at me,” Jon said.

“Isn’t he an NPC?” Posh asked.

“What universe do you come from?” Jon said.

“Oh, you should come visit. We’d love to have you,” Posh said.

“Yes, please come,” his friend said. “My name is Sally.”

‘Of course you are,’ Jon thought, turning to Loxy. “Am I dreaming?”

“It is difficult to sort sometimes, isn’t it,” Loxy said.

“Not the answer I was looking for,” Jon said.

Shackleford clicked her fingers for control of the room. Everyone looked to her, except Jon, who continued to stare at Loxy, as if frozen. She smiled and leaned towards him and whispered, “we’ll play later,” but when he didn’t respond she gave him her full attention. He was non responsive, even when she waved a hand in his face and then kissed him.

“What did you do?” Loxy asked.

“I didn’t do that,” Shackleford said.

“You did snap your fingers,” Sally said. “Did you hypnotize him?”

“I am confused by your accent,” Shackleford said. “Try not to speak so much.”

Shackleford approached Jon, pulled a crystal out of her pocket, waved it around him, and then stared into it. She pocketed it.

“Well?” Blue asked.

“He’s not here,” Shackleford said.

“Seriously?” Loxy said. “I could have told you that.”

“Yeah, but I prefer my crystal clarity,” Shackleford said.

“Try snapping your fingers again,” Philomena said.

“Excuse me, Philomena. I am professor with a double PhD in in the dark magics, with multiple masters in... Let me handle this,” Shackleford said.

“Put him on your desk,” Loxy said.

They cleared the desk and then lifted Jon together, like a prop, and laid him on his back and straightened his limbs where stayed where placed like he was nothing more than nice mannequin.

“I am Ora; he’s stiff as a board,” Kaleo-Ora android observed.

“You didn’t tell me magic school was so arousing,” Sally said. “Can you make me orgasm with a handshake?”

“I am Telania; sure. Humans are easily hypnotized,” this from Kaleo’s dolphin friend, utilizing the Android ‘Shay’ to be present.

Loxy retrieved an otoscope from her pocket that didn’t seem to hold anything and began examined Jon’s eyes.

“How did she do that?” Sally asked.

Loxy put her way her scope, then retrieved a stethoscope and began listening to lungs, heart, and palpating spaces.

“What else does she have in there?” Sally asked.

“Pff, who knows,” Posh said.

“Is she a doctor doctor?” Sally asked. “Like an MD, Doctor, or just a PhD Doctor, or like just an assumed titled Doctor, like that Seuss guy?”

“I am a nurse practitioner,” Loxy said. “And in many universes, out rank the MD Doctor.”

“I am Kaleo,” Kaleo Ora spoke. “Will he be okay?”

Loxy completed her exam.

“Well?” Shackleford asked.

Loxy shrugged. “Try snapping your fingers again.”

Shackleford snapped her fingers.

Jon sat straight up, gasping in fright, breathing. Loxy and Shackleford each took an arm.

“Six words!” he said.

“Shhh, easy,” Loxy said.

“Where did you go?” Loxy asked.

Jon brought his breathing into control, but his eyes remained wide. He met Loxy’s eyes.

“Mary Poppins.” He said, and flashed back...

In a cartoon world, Loxy dressed in an outrageously sexy steam punk, Victorian outfit.

“Oh, aren’t you sweet,” Loxy said. “But no, I am her sister, Cherry.”

“We got to stop her,” Jon said.

“My sister?” Cherry-Loxy said.

“Jon!” Loxy said, snapping her fingers in front of his eyes. He was gone and then back, that quick.

“Six words,” Jon said. “OMG. They put it into a song. What’s wrong with people?!”

“Oh, you’re in that class,” Shackleford said.

“What class?” Sally asked.

Posh snapped his fingers and Sally went to sleep.

“OMG,” Jon said, angry at Posh. “You use the word on her.”

“Well, of course,” Posh said. “How else would my kind hook up with a human female?”

“I don’t like you,” Jon said.

“Jon,” Loxy said. “You’ve never used that word on anyone?”

“Well, that was before I knew!” Jon said.

“Seriously?” Loxy asked. “There are several warnings in the song itself to be careful, and there was a reason she didn’t say the word precisely backwards.”

“All of this fuss over one word,” Blue said.

“I am Telania; that doesn’t explain how the professor’s snap triggered him,” Telania-Shay said.

“Yeah, it does,” Shackleford said. “He put in his own subconscious block, and muddled it.”

“I’ll rewire it when we get home,” Loxy said. “For now, back to class, come on.”

Chapter 10

Jon managed to get out of bed without waking anyone to go pee, sleepily made it to the toilet, but was unable to go right into peeing because of an REM erection, while waiting his eyes drifted closed, he felt his balance wavering and was frustrated, he just wanted to return to sleep, to dreaming... A hand took hold of his penis... His eyes opened. Fersia was straddling the toilet, about to put it into her mouth.

“Stop, wait, what are you doing?” Jon asked.

“I thought you wanted help,” Fersia said.

“I was waiting for it to go down,” Jon said.

“Oh, I thought you wanted to tulpa it off,” Fersia said.

“What?” Jon asked.

“What are you guys doing?” Loxy asked, coming in, sleepily yawning.

“Nothing,” Fersia said. She still had a firm grip on something.

Loxy unhinged one of Fersia’s hands, pushed in between them and sat on the toilet, nearly fell in, adjusted, squatted, and began peeing immediately.

“Fuck,” Jon said.

“Don’t mind me, keep playing...” Loxy said.

“We’re not playing,” Jon said.

“I was playing,” Fersia said.

“What are you even doing up?” Jon asked.

“I am a cat. I am supposed to be up at this hour,” Fersia said.

“You’re supposed to sleep like 14 hours a day, when do you sleep?”

“Are you angry?” Loxy asked, stroking the thing in front of her above Fersia’s grasp.

Keera entered. “What are you all doing?”

“I am tired. And I need to pee,” Jon said.

“Well, I am almost done,” Loxy said. “Then you two can finish.” “It’s still pretty solid,” Fersia said.

“It is,” Loxy said. “You can’t pee like this.”

“Need some help?” Keera asked.

“Yeah,” Loxy and Fersia said.

Keera joined, standing behind Jon and adding her hands in a reach around.

Alish entered. “Why wasn’t I invited?”

“Oh, you’re always invited, come on...” Loxy said. “Come help us get it down so he can pee.”

Lester came in and touched it. It went down immediately. “Can’t a guy get some sleep around here, seriously,” he went back to the bedroom.

Loxy got up, lifted the lid, and washed her hands. Lester came back and began to pee even as Jon’s stream started.

“Can’t you wait?” Jon snapped.

“You woke me up, deal with it,” Lester said.

Jon woke with such a gasp that he woke all his bed companions. Light came up dimly, thanks to Cortana, responding to Jon and the concern of his friends.

“We seriously need to focus on finding Lester,” Jon said.

“What happened?” Loxy asked.

“I want him out of my dreams?” Jon said.

“And into your car?” Fersia asked. Jon frowned at her. “What? That’s exactly the kind of joke you would make.”

“Do I look like I am joking?” Jon asked.

“No, but you seriously need to have this looked at,” Keera said, touching the bulge in his flannel pajamas.

“Since when did you start wearing pajamas?” Loxy asked.

Jon sat up again, gasping. Loxy woke with him. “You okay?”

“I think I just indirectly channeled Billy Ocean,” Jon said.

“Come on,” Loxy said, pushing him towards the edge of the bed.

They went to the kitchen where she began making him tea. Jon leaned against the counter.

“What’s wrong with me?” Jon asked.

“What’s wrong with any of us?” Loxy asked. “The weight of the world, while trying to understand this thing called life... You’ve got quite a bit on your plate. Part of that’s your American habit of putting more on your plate than your stomach can take, some of it’s your over inflated sense of taking it all on, and part of it is your desire to not let anything go to waste for fear of drought and famine.”

“Am I dreaming?” Jon asked.

Loxy shrugged. “Aren’t we all?”

She made two cups of tea, hot, and brought them to the table. Jon followed. She pushed the tea at him, and pushed his the pad pencil his way.

“So, let’s remote something,” Loxy said. “Go for ambiance.”

Jon wrote four tiny dashes, group close together like the dot corners of a trapezoid. He and Loxy puzzled over it.

“We agreed, for dots grouped like that is air,” Loxy said. “Dashes?”

“Oh, there’s movement,” Jon said.

“A breeze?” Loxy asked.

“I feel movement,” Jon said. “Cool. Oh, the closer the dots are the colder it is?”

Loxy took notes of this. Jon drew a circle. He put a face in it.

“Probably not a face,” Loxy said.

Jon erased the face, but left the circle.

“Close your eyes,” Loxy said.

Jon closed his eyes. He traveled. He nearly jumped out of it because he was holding the face. He breathed. It was a steering wheel. It looked like an alien face. An alien praying mantis face. It disturbed him, but seeing the feminine hands lightly holding the wheel relaxed him. He saw her eyes in the rearview mirror, and was again startled, because he expected to see his face.

“Jon?” the voice sounded distant.

“I am in a car. Not moving,” Jon said. “Traffic light. Air conditioner is on. I feel it, contrast to the sun.”

“Go on,” Loxy encouraged.

“You’re beautiful,” Jon said.

The face in the mirror smiled.

“Can she sense me?” Jon asked, worried.

The light was green. Someone behind her honked. Her smile faded and she looked crossly back at the driver. She put the car in park. The driver behind her got out of his vehicle. He was armed. Jon was more concerned. Why didn’t she drive away? She lowered the window and he began to verbally chastise her with horrendous language. The sound of a collision drew their attention. A fuel truck and a car had collided, because the truck had run the light coming from the other way. Two other cars entered the accident, and the entire intersection was now a tangled mess. A mess that may not have included the female had she gone through, but for sure would have caught the driver behind her.

“The correct thing to say was thank you,” came the words from the female. “Allow others whatever time they need to process their world without pushing your urgency on them. Go back to your vehicle, and sell your guns because you’re too much of an egotistical, hot head to be carrying.”

She rolled up the window and looked into the mirror. “Thank you.”

Jon snapped back to present.

“Was that real?” Jon asked.

Loxy shrugged. “Don’t know.”

“If it’s real, did I influence what happened?” Jon asked.

“I don’t know,” Loxy said. “Maybe we do this all the time and maybe it’s real and fiction simultaneously. Maybe all the good things and bad things we think happen somewhere. Maybe we are not the originator of thoughts, but rather are simply the experiencers of thoughts. This does not mean we cannot create thoughts... But how much are we really creating? Stirring the pot, shoveling out what’s there, that’s not creation; it is simply automatic response. Being compassionately mindful, without responding to external or internal worlds is where opportunity lies. We are not the internal world any more than we are the external world; this exercise allows us to pull back, be compassionately mindful, and then create. I find this view liberating, and akin to something Jung was espousing.”

Loxy touched the table in a way that opened a digital book on the surface. The book ‘What’s in the Way Is the Way: A Practical Guide for Waking Up to Life,’ by Mary O’Malley. She opened it to a something she had highlighted: “Life created the mind as a tool for maneuvering through Life, not to be in charge of it. The mind is a wonderful servant, but it is a horrible master. Giving it the task of being in charge of Life has created the world of struggle that most people live in all day long, keeping them cut off from peace and joy.” Loxy then summoned Carl Jung’s words, specifically *Liber Novus*, Page 250: ‘My thoughts are not my self but exactly like the things of the world, alive and dead. Just as I am not damaged through living in a partly chaotic world, so too I am not damaged if I live in my partly chaotic thought world. Thoughts are natural events that you do not possess, and whose meaning you only imperfectly recognize.’

“Do you realize, you always know just what to say to provoke peace, thoughtful compassion,” Jon said.

“Well, not always,” Loxy said.

“Yeah, always,” Jon said. “I experienced a friend wondering if you had an evil twin sister...”

Loxy smiled at that. “I know,” Loxy said. “People don’t have opposites. I am a people. Archetypes, maybe. They exist on a continuum.”

“People don’t?” Jon asked.

“People are freer than archetypes and angels. They are the gardeners that tend to the overall wellbeing of the forest,” Loxy mused. “We are vehicles of light. Fireflies twinkling and dancing with stars. ‘Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that;’ I practice this thing voiced by Martin Luther King, but I mix this with my own metaphor, a realization that can induce shadows. When I shine on you, I have to be aware of my brightness, less I spin shadows and scare you. We all shine, we all spin shadows.”

“Is Lester my shadow?” Jon asked.

Loxy laughed. “Lester is Lester. Loxy is Loxy. You are you. Just because we share aspects and origin arcs doesn’t mean we’re not our own persons. You share atoms with a world, and you are no more that world than the wave is the ocean, but that, too, is us, and we will return there.”

“Do you like being here?” Jon asked.

Loxy brought her chair closer, facing him. She had him reposition his chair. Their knees touched. When he was settled, his eyes curious, she said very clearly: “I love you. This is not forced. This is not an accident. This is not Stockholm syndrome. This is love.”

“I used six words,” Jon said.

“Yep,” Loxy said. “We use them all the time. It’s the primary flavors of life.”

“Charms? Physics?!” Jon said.

“We live in a world of six charms, but we’re looking for the seventh,” Loxy said. “Pocahontas, Color the Wind.”

“Lucky charms,” Jon mused. “OMG, we’re still practicing alchemy, we just changed the name!”

“Pretty much,” Loxy agreed.

Jon mused over nonsense, or seemingly nonsense, tried to make it a coherent, relevant thought, but found his eyes on Loxy’s knees, and then the only thought he had was for the thing he had convinced himself he couldn’t partake in. He stood up, pushing his chair back. He held a hand out to her. She accepted. He pulled her up to a standing position, and on standing, he put both hands to her face and kissed her. His hands went to her shoulders, down her arms, found her hips, turned her into the table, and lifted her to the table. The table adjusted so that the right parts met just right. She scooted to the edge of the table, meeting him, freeing him, accepting his urgency. The thing about tables, or walls, and urgency is that Jon frequently found that the standing position of engagement made it difficult for him to arrive. Engaging Loxy, engaging anyone, is the simultaneous deliberate and accidental activation of flavors. Loxy unlocked herself as she spoke words of encouragement, aided by the present tilt of the table that allowed the precise amount of pressure with grind. She exploded upon Jon like a waterfall over a rock, unlocking him, and he dissolved, exploding into a light.

Chapter 11

Jon found himself in a dark space, floating. This didn't feel like space/time, as if he were in orbit. He couldn't discern any stars. He couldn't discern anything specific outside of himself. He couldn't really even discern himself, in terms of body. The darkness had a heft to it, like immersed in taffy. He tried to reach out, as if looking for the lid to a coffin. He discerned forward movement. It felt like falling and not falling. He made the gesture of lowering his arms and movement stopped. He felt stability.

"Hello?" he shouted.

Nothing. No sound. No voice. The darkness moved, though. I found a growing sense of desperation to get somewhere, to see anything. And on that, a bubble appeared. A singular, fragile looking soap bubble. It had sheen, a double point of light, as if a penetrating sun beam sparked two coinciding edges. It sparked, directing a light at Jon.

"Um," Jon thought. "Hi." How else would one respond to bubble flashing a light. No, not just a light. It presented a rainbow spectrum.

It flashed more rainbows at him.

"You're a curious fellow," Jon said. "I am happy for your company."

It discharged a lightning bolt. Jon felt pain.

"Hey?!" Jon said.

It fired two more.

"Ow!" Jon said.

He tried backing away. The bubble receded, but then came at him, more rainbows shot at him.

More bubbles arrived. Three more, then nine, then seventeen. There flashes of rainbows and collision of bubbles, mergers, departures from mergers. They collided with him, but felt nothing, except when they discharged lightening. More bubbles arrived. They enclosed him in a sphere of bubbles, flashing rainbows. He was pretty sure this wasn't a good thing, but he didn't seem to have any ability to flee or defend himself. He felt overwhelmed by the rainbows flashing at him, but there was no way to shield his eyes. Rainbows flooded his brain. They began discharging lightning bolts. Crying out increased the rapidity of being electrocuted. They all fired bolts, sustained bolts, lighting the space around him with a bluish green light. He passed out.

When he came to, he found himself lying in a field of grass. The sky was blue. There were scattered clouds. He sat up. Country all around him, flowers, trees, a mountain, a stream going towards a beech. He got up turned about. He felt okay. He didn't appear to be harmed by the energy bolts that had racked him. He heard the puffing of a cow. He became aware of cows in the distance. Sheep. Chickens... And a chest. There was nothing particularly disarming about the chest, except he found himself fearing. He forced himself to go to the chest. He opened it and found the inside compartmentalized. Most of the compartments were empty, but he did find items floating in several spaces, floating like icons imposed on the world, and when he grabbed the familiar item, he found himself holding a torch.

"Fuck me," Jon thought, turning around, holding a torch, and looking for the grid lines that normally defined the world of Minecraft.

Jon could discern no gridlines. The world looked real in every aspect. He looked real to himself, at least, what he could see about himself. His hands looked like real hands. His feet like real feet. His...

“Fuck,” Jon said. “Come on! Even Steve starts with clothes?”

No response. Due to the placement of a tree compared to the distant sun, Jon saw the sun click up a space. It was smoother than clicking, but discernable movement.

“What the hell?!” Jon demanded. “Is this like the TOS episode ‘Arena?’ You want me to prove myself or my species by not killing the Gorn? Is it your version of Survivor? I don’t want to play this!” Nothing changed. “Okay, I admit. I like playing this, but this, this is too much.” Nothing changed. “Come on! Talk to me?!”

A horse nudged him from behind, licking, nibbling at his shoulder. Jon propelled himself forwards, leaving the ground, tripped over grass, and fell rolling, coming up swinging the torch like a madman. When he realized it was just a horse and he wasn’t harmed, he relaxed.

Jon pointed the torch at the sky. “Don’t you laugh! This is a very scary place and I want to go home.” He had no evidence for laughter or any other emotions.

Jon considered how much the horse scared him, and then remember, like actually hearing a meme in his head, “they mostly come at night. Mostly.” With another expletive released, he went to work on the nearest tree. Collecting wood had never been easier. He hit it with a torch. It made a sound. He hit a dozen more times and section fell out of the tree, becoming a block icon. He had to admit that was pretty cool, but again, no one responded. He collected the wood and found a problem. He had a torch in one hand, a block of wood in the other. He spun, wondering what to do. He went to the chest. He put the torch next to the chest and it remained. He tossed the wood from hand to hand. He dropped the wood, picked it up. He opened the chest and put it in the chest. He tried manipulating the wood in the chest. He took the wood out of the chest. The chest closed itself and he sat down on it, pondering the problem. A fly came at his eye and he waved it a way.

He stopped. “That’s new. So I am not exactly in Steve’s world?” he asked. “Or have the updated the program again? Fuck, I hope you have Alex here because I don’t want to be the last real man on the planet. I am not Tom Hanks!” Jon mused. “I assure you; that was funny. Somewhere.”

Jon scratched his left eye with the back of his hand. With the left eye closed he became aware of inner inventory. There were three torches in inventory. He became aware of the number informing him of three. There were three blocks of wood. He opened his left eye. Full world view, holding a block of wood. Left eye closed, he had access to an inventory. He saw himself in a mirror, affirming his nakedness. He opened his eye to find full world view. He closed his right eye. Information in a foreign script appeared.

“Not helpful,” Jon said. “Might as well be matrix rain.”

He closed both eyes. He found a flow chart for mission activities and a toggle button that scrolled through different screens, perhaps one being a placement for a map, and then several others he had no clue, a notebook, and finally one obvious one... as it was labeled, in English and dozen other Earth languages ‘sleep.’ He touched the words.

“You cannot do that now.”

“Of course,” Jon said.

Closing his left eye, he found the inner inventory, and the tiny work space. He changed the wood block into useful things, made a toolbox, and placed it next to the freebie chest, and then gathered more wood. He took the entire tree, and got seedlings and two apples. He planted the seedlings, made a wood shovel, a gardening tool, and a pickaxe. He went to work on shaping one of the face of the nearby mountain, tearing a space into it to not only provide temporary shelter, but for more material. He gave the entrance a double door, and used the stone to upgrade to improved tools, gathered more stone, and made a stone fence around the chest drop off point, and had just enough stone fence to section off a space around the door to his cave home. He went and gathered the chest, the first toolbox, and left one of the freebie torch so no monsters would spawn in his origin spot. He retired to his cave home and watched the first sunset. Soon the lowing of zombies could be discern over the landscape. A skeleton shot an arrow at him. He retreated into the home, placing a torch. The light came on and he turned to find a creeper staring at him. He screamed.

Jon woke up in the field, next to his torch. An arrow hit his shoulder. He ran, jumped over the fence, ran to the next fence, jumped over it, and ran to the entrance of his cave home, finding the doors having been blown free. He fell into the hole, found a one of his freebie torches, and lit it. He repaired the home. He could wait out the night in relative safety, but felt an urgency to be doing something, and was feeling some pain. He ate an apple. He felt instantly full, and his injury repaired itself. There was at least quickness of recovery, because arrows hurt. Dying hurt like a son of a bitch, though he could still touch the memory of it, a bad taste lingering on his tongue; it was such a strong, palpable memory it much more likely he would actively avoid death.

The next couple of days were spent fortifying his immediate area, growing a garden, finding coal. This was not 'minecraft' but close enough he called it 'my craft.' Before he found coal, he found animal poop. Specifically, cow poop. He used it for a fuel to in an oven that heated his home and cooked fish. Poop torches didn't work. The beach had waves. All water was fortunately drinkable. He discovered a book on the map page that unlocked icons of the things he found, a formula page for making stuff, which unlocked as he found it, and, interestingly, a very new thing, a table of elements. It was sparsely populated, iron being the first one that he 'actively' unlocked; it came with a chime that called his attention to the inner pages. Newness and reward were the little treasures that kept him interested, as much of the grinding was just monotonous.

He talked to himself a lot. He talked to Loxy, hoping, pretending she could hear him. He talked to the orbs, hoping they could hear him. Depending on which paradigm he had adopted for the day, his conversations with no one waffled from gratitude to misery. One of the paradigms was the belief he had died and gone to hell. He actively reminded himself, this wasn't hell. It wasn't purgatory. If it was related at all to a religious concept, it was a reasonable substitute for a heavenly afterlife for someone who really didn't want to go to 'heaven.' He didn't want to go there not just because he didn't think he belong in such a place, but because something akin to the feeling he remember Mark Twain righting about; if I have to sing or listen to choirs, not interested.

Once he had a compass, he was exploring further and further from home. Up on a rock, overlooking an ocean, a backpack which doubled his inventory he found his first gift. An artifact,

just beyond the waves. He rushed to discover a shipwreck. He set up a camp and a bed and went to work unpacking the whole of it. Dolphins played, watching him work. He uncovered a zombie sailor. He killed it. He hated this part. He knew 'zombies' were dead by his definition and that this was likely a mercy thing, but he wanted another option. The dolphins chattered at him as he sat eating an apple. He wished he spoke dolphin. These guys seemed happy. In the ship he found a beach ball and the dolphins went wild. He tossed them the ball and they played with it for hours, and brought it back to him wanting to engage him. He declined in favor of work.

Work paid off. He found a chemistry set, with beakers, and a microscope. He found a book! He couldn't read most of it, but the diagrams offered new elements, and a construction page for a new artifact. It was a device that went under the stove and sorted elements as you baked items. He collected all the stuff, broke down the chest. There was another chest below this. It was a strange looking chest, different than he had seen before, and contained four slots. Inside the compartments were 'bags.' Each bag opened up to reveal a specific item. Bags of holding! There were bags of gold, bags of emeralds, bags of diamonds, and a bag of iron. He moved the bag of iron to his inventory, and the bag broke. All of his slots filled with iron, and a few pieces of iron fell to the floor. Putting the iron back into the space in the special box created a new bag of holding. He put all the iron back in the bag. Apparently, it was not as full as before, so he had lost some in the act of trying to move the bag. He then took a time out to build four double chests. He sat down his backpack and took out bag of holding. His inventory overflowed, and when he opened an empty chest, he was able to fill it with the diamonds, picking up the overflow so the chest was full. He did this for the other three bags, and then broke the special chest to see if he could carry it. He did it this way because he feared if broke and all the items were lost, that would suck.

Not only did he recover the box, he discovered he could open it, just like he could his backpack. The next experiment was to put the items back in the box. He was relieved to find it accepted it, but also, it didn't weigh him down. Carrying too much iron or gold, slowed him, but inside the chest of holding, he might as well be carrying feathers. The box took up four slots of his inventory. His backpack took up four slots. This was a good trade. He collected all the material, then picked up his backpack. He unpacked the remainder of the boat, finding one last item; a telescope. He carried all of this home, feeling more satisfied than Tom Hanks with a pile of FedEx goods. That night, he set up on top of his home, which had once been a hill and now was a fortified tower, and looked at the moon and the stars. The moon had more texture than he had seen with just his eyes. It seemed like a real place. Through the telescope, the stars looked like rainbows.

"Oh! Hello, my little friends," Jon said. He felt less alone. His nightly ritual became looking at the stars, and talking to them.

निर्मित

He built a temple to Isis. It was made completely of polished Diorite, interspaced with diamond blocks, and pools of water. Behind the diamond blocks, and under the water, were light blocks, so that the diamonds and pools were illuminated. He came here to meditate. He thought about Loxy here the most. Near the temple was his library, where he crafted books and sorted the

differences between my-craft and minecraft. He practiced magic and chemistry. He tried remote viewing and got nowhere. He made portals and went nowhere. At least, he didn't travel the same way he did in the Safe Haven Universe. He did make a portal to hell. It took forever to fortify the place, and he died three times in the process. Once fortified, he made his way to the upper most bedrock ceiling, and established a home there with intentions of building stations connected by tracks, dropping back into the hell and building portals to cover greater distances in the world. Above the ceiling were stars. Bringing the telescope gave him a view of the 'rainbows' above.

He didn't build the stations. He got bored and went for longer walks. He would come across the occasional Ender and avoid eye contact. They were creepy. He knew he needed Ender pearls, and he wondered if completing the game would allow to travel home, but he didn't want to kill them. They seem reasonably sentient. Talking to them was useless. Because of this stance, he took a greater stance at trying not to kill zombies, skeletons, and creepers. He had a shaded corral of zombies, and was trying to find a recipe to cure the zombies. He had a shaded area for skeletons, too, and he had no clue what to do with them. He was had one fenced in creeper, and was trying to tame it. He was determined to find a way.

He found a habited village and immediately took to fortifying it with stone fence, lighting up the entire area with torches, and when he finally had the place secured from wilderness and monsters, he began his study of the people. He found the people hard to look at. They were people, but not human. They remind him of the 'goonies' in the Popeye cartoons. They also reminded him of the 'big nosed aliens' from an alien conspiracy theory he followed. He made a home here, dug to bedrock, and built a tunnel back to his main home, and then he came back to continue his study. He was so starved for attention, it didn't matter to him they were not human. The women were bigger than the men. Bigger in mass and stronger, and did much of the lifting. They carried sacks of potatoes and buckets of water and they made the village work. Jon was curious. He never saw the men toil. The men did carry items for selling and trading. They established that much communication. No words, but they could reasonably barter. They had nothing he wanted. Their books were gibberish. No matter how long he spent trying to talk to them, he couldn't communicate in their language, and they weren't getting his.

The people were an enigma. He was consistently surprised by their sophisticated building and a relatively straight forward bartering concepts, and yet they didn't strike him as being the brightest people he had ever met. They were accident prone. They tended to wander off, only to rush back at midnight in such a panic they couldn't remember how to get back in the gate. He solved this with singing. Singing calmed them and they would fixate on him and follow him back through the gate. Once in the gate, gate closed, he stopped singing and they ran to the nearest door and hid for the night.

They had a division of labor. He learned skills and recipes from both the males and the females. He improved upon his own building technique from unpacking some of their stuff. They didn't help him directly with that. They just stood around and watched him. He learned how to use more plants for food and ascetics from the females. Several of the females brought him flowers. He stored them. Once he gave a female a flower. She ate it.

The women weren't unpleasant looking, they were just big. Not fat. Big. Like pro WWE women entertainers. They were sturdy and strong, and yet appropriately curved... but then there was the alien face, which if the shadows were right looked passably human, but usually not.

They were as affectionate as cats. After being in their village a month, he woke up to one in bed with him. In his world, if he had done this, it would not have been seen in the right light. He was startled at first, thinking fuck a zombie had gotten in, but as his eyes adjusted and he realized who she was, heard her soothing mumbled sounds, realized her intent, he didn't resist. He let it happen. He did not die, the world didn't blow up, he didn't go home.

The discourse at the public well changed. Everyone was gathered talking. He had a bigger group following him as he gathered produce from the gardens and replanted as necessary. He went and meditated at the church. The religious leader tried talking to him. He pointed to the picture of the rainbow prominently displayed in the stained glass, 'death star' window; his joke for the round window at the back of the church. He wondered if they had a great flood story and this was their covenant symbol. He returned to gathering materials, exploring further and further from his new home. He would return at night and most the time his new bed mate was there waiting for him, excited and insisting. Sometimes she brought a friend, or a sister, it was difficult to know the relationships here. Everyone attended the kids; there was no division in that duty. He discovered if he tarried more than a week, all the women in the village would take turns visiting him. If the men were bothered, they didn't show it. They actually seemed to be encouraging it. The longer he was there, the more vigorous the play, the more insistent they were at having their turns.

The new children began arriving. They were clearly different. They were Goonie and human hybrids. Jon ceased his wanderings to participate. He sang songs, twinkle litter star, and held children. He made tiny cribs and hooked them together so he rocked one in his arms, he rocked them all. Jon became more aware of the goonies differences. They had a set adult age at which they didn't age further. Apparently, they could live indefinitely; he never saw anyone sick, or old. They could be killed by zombies. They could fall and injure themselves. Unlike him, they did not regenerate.

There was a nearby mountain. Jon built a safe path, a fenced and gate area all the way to the mountain. Built another home at the base, and built steps going all the way to the top, secured the whole area, and went meditating up there, and brought his telescope. He made paper and decided to once again return to practicing his remote viewing in the quiet of the night. He could see the torch lights of the village below. He studied the moon and occasionally saw a fleeting rainbow through the telescope. It was in the hours before sleep and the stirrings before waking that Jon began to find successful outings: hypnagogic and hypnopompic hallucinations brought him closer to home and Loxy than he had ever gotten since arriving here. He began recording his dreams again, and noticed a trend. There were rainbows in the dreams. There were dreams of a great flood that wiped out a more sophisticated people, people more like him but not him, and the Goonies were what remained.

The children had words. "Stars Twinkle, Papa." That was new. They spoke a smidgeon of pigeon English and Goonies. He suddenly had hope for discourse.

One night, during vigorous play, Jon had his first 'travel' experience since arriving at the world.

He found himself ice skating. He was pretty sure it was the American Airlines center where the Stars played. He was not alone. A twirling blur of female held his attention. A lovely flame, hovering over the ice. He would see parts of her clearly, legs, knees, hips, arm, side

breast... She was dressed like a blue flame and she came out of the twirl and came at him, coming to a stop with her butt against him. She looked over her shoulder at him coyly.

“Well, hello, Jon,” Topsy said. “Like what you see?”

“Yes,” Jon said. He felt no compulsion to hide that.

“You’ve been gone for a moment,” Topsy said. “Did you break a rule?”

“Maybe,” Jon said.

“So, since we’ve established you’re a rule breaker, there is no reason not to engage me,” Topsy said. “Let’s break some rules together.”

Jon became aware of Lester in the penalty box. Lester stood up and tried to speak to him but he was contained in the glass. Unable to communicate the way he wanted, he used a meme that Jon recognized. He did ‘Spock’ hand against the glass and heard-imagined, ‘Spock, no...’ Maybe ‘Kirk, no,’ as the meme felt backwards.

“Are you holding Lester hostage?” Jon asked.

“He violated a contract. Gave me the cold shoulder. I put him on ice,” Topsy said.

“What are you?” Jon asked.

“We’ve established this,” Topsy said.

“Yeah, but what are you? The devil?” Jon asked.

“Not even on the same continuum,” Topsy said. “Jinn are more akin to forces of nature. We help bind the stars and galaxies together. We’re the glue in gluons. Join me, and we can rule the galaxy as, well, whatever combo you like. Creepy father daughter relationships. Step mom son? Sister brother?”

“What would it take to free Lester?” Jon asked.

“He could honor his contract with me,” Topsy said.

“The longer you keep him on ice, the less likely that is to happen,” Jon said. “He’s pretty stubborn.”

“I am more so,” Topsy said. “And I am eternal!”

Jon scratched his head. She skated around him. She skated away, made a figure eight, encapsulating him in one of the infinity rings. There was gentle, familiar piano notes. She sang the Schoolhouse rock song, ‘figure 8.’ She proactively displayed her abilities of form holding as she made the 8. “Figure 8 is double 4. Figure 4 is half of 8. If you skate, you would be great, if you could make a figure 8. That’s a circle that turns round upon itself. 1 times 8 is 2 times 4. 4 times 4 is 2 times 8. If you skate upon thin ice, you’d be wise if you thought twice before you made another single move...”

“You do think I am attractive, don’t you?” Topsy asked.

“Yes. Already established,” Jon said. No reason to hide that. Physically, she was attractive. He was pretty sure that was an illusion, but that was also a part of finding things appealing; finding attractive in others is a super power. It’s the ability to see past flaws to only the positive attributes. “Back on Lester. Will you negotiate his release with me?”

“Interesting,” Topsy said, coming to a stop in the middle of the 8. “I thought you would like to negotiate your own release from rainbow world.”

“You know where I am?” Jon asked.

“Sure. I have been following your exploits,” Topsy said. “I won a bet you would sleep with the locals. I lost in terms of timing. It took you much longer to hook up than I imagined it would take.”

“You can get me out of there?” Jon asked.

“Yes, Jon. I am not Glenda. I am not going to be all obscure and make you jump through a lot of hoops to help you realize you always have the power to go home,” Topsy said. “I will make you jump through a hoop, though. Care to make a figure eight with me?”

“If I have sex with you, you will bring me home?” Jon asked.

“Yep,” Topsy said. “I am that easy.”

“What about Lester?” Jon asked.

“He stays on ice,” Topsy said.

“What is the condition for letting him go?” Jon asked.

“He honors his contract. I would be willing to trade you. Figure eight me, and I will consider his contract with me null and void, without penalty forever, and release him back to his mundane life,” Topsy said. “But Jon, let’s be clear on this point. Trade for Lester, I don’t help you come home. It’s one or the other.”

Jon mused. “What does coupling with you actually mean?”

Topsy went around the circle containing Jon, bringing her orbit in closer. She touched him, and drew a circle around him with her fingers touching his body and came to a stop in front of him. Her finger came to a point under his chin. “You and I become a couple. I can have sex with you anytime, anywhere, and you may call on me for the same, anytime, anywhere. You say my name, and I will engage you in the most lovely, delicious, satisfying intimacy you have ever experienced. This contract is eternal. No divorce allowed.”

“I have contracts with others,” Jon said.

“You may continue to honor all your other contracts. I am not bothered by your relationships with others. I even like Loxy. I want you to maintain that,” Topsy said. “You’re a better person with her in your life. You can even continue to have your share of strange. I am not interested in strange or others, and once I bond with you, this will be for eternity. I will only be with you forever. Don’t make me jump through hoops like that Barbara Eden chick. Just fuck me when I need it. That simple.”

“That doesn’t sound simple. I don’t know your frequency or how it will disrupt my life. My life is already pretty complicated...”

“You will not notice any disruption to your life. It will be pretty much the same as it is now, with occasional interludes with me,” Topsy said. “You will have dream adventures, worlds with just me in it, and you will return home. I will sometimes visit planet Bliss. Sometimes see you at Safe Haven, sometimes engage you in your real world, as me or mysterious other, but I get time with you!”

“Why do you want me?”

“I like you,” Topsy said. “I prefer over Lester. He was a rebound choice. I choose you over anyone. We have a compatibility thing. I would have accepted Lester just to be close to you. I don’t know why we like what we like, but that’s my preference.”

“Release Lester,” Jon said. “I will engage you.”

“Done,” tipsy said. She snapped her fingers and Lester was gone from the penalty box. Jon fell through the ice and found himself back in rainbow world, back at the origin point... Apparently, leaving the world resulted in death.

Chapter 12

Jon found the offspring grown. People didn't stay children long in this world and though their language ability was improved compared to the Goonies, it was limited to nouns and simple verbs. Their favorite phrase was stars twinkle. They surprised him by taking up his work in terms of chemistry and engineering. They expanded his periodic table. They were so much more industrious, and yet not wanting to leave the village, that he decided to move his supply cache from origin point to the new mountain base.

Tipsy arrived and caught him unpacking chests and filling train carts. She looked fabulously surreal, as if she were game character inserted into the wrong game. She kissed him and began inspecting crates.

"How dreadfully primitive," Topsy said.

"Yeah, well," Jon said.

"You haven't summoned me," Topsy said. "You can call me anytime, and I'll show up. You don't even need a lamp. We can even do it here. The Rainbow sprites gave me a visa because you and I have bonded."

"Rainbow sprites?" Jon asked.

"Your overlords, or hosts for this universe," Topsy said. "Their kind and our kind don't usually get along. They're much more permissive. Jinn are more authoritarian, letter of the law sort of thing. So, enough about that, why haven't you called?"

"Yeah, well, a little busy," Jon said. "I don't suppose you could like snap your fingers and make everything here go there?"

"Sure," Topsy said. "I could. But I won't. I am not your slave."

Jon went back to unpacking crates and packing train cars.

"Are you ignoring me?" Topsy asked.

"No. Just busy," Jon said. "Do you want me to do something?"

Topsy drew closer. "I want what you want, as much as you want, and so, I find it interesting that you don't just ravish me every time you see me," she said.

"Oh, well, I am actually a bit tired, and I feel kind of grungy," Jon said. He was perturbed by the fact he hadn't ravished her yet, too, but there was trajectory here and some resistance. He didn't get to explore his inner thoughts, as her flibbertigibbet-ness was stronger than his.

"You are slumming it," Topsy agreed. "But then, that's one of the reasons I chose you."

"Was that an insult?" Jon asked.

"No. Statement of fact. Jinn human relationships are the equivalent of slumming," Topsy said. "No, it's more akin to bestiality. I am human, you are my Alaskan Husky. If I put peanut butter on it, would you lick it?"

"Even without peanut butter," Jon said.

"Nice," Topsy said. "We don't have to do it here, if you find it too dirty. We can just talk."

"You want to talk?" Jon asked.

"Sure, why not. It's part of our arrangement. Adventures and relationships," Topsy said. "Sex relationship and talking relationships."

"Are we married?" Jon asked.

“Oh, no! That would so ruin the sex part?” Topsy said. “First, humans and Jinn can’t have offspring. Mostly. There are caveats. Like with the Greeks. They were frequently getting into double binds with us. Jinn have arranged marriages. Mostly. Again, caveats. I am married. Boring relationship, no fun at all, just duty and code. He has his side interest. I have you.”

“Can one renegotiate the contract?” Jon asked.

“You’re contemplating renegeing on our agreement?” Topsy asked.

“No. Just, hypothetically?” Jon said.

“Hypothetically, all contracts can be renegotiated, if both parties are agreeable,” Topsy said. “Harassing me to change my mind would cause me to become entrenched. You’re not going to come up with a better offer than our present contract. I am a Jinn. I have no wants that I can’t satisfy on my own.”

“And yet, you wanted to bond with me?” Jon asked.

“I can’t explain that. Probably a numbers thing. Just consider all the billions of trillions of entities exploring the third dimensional space. There are some combinations that are just irresistible. I love you, that’s it. I want you. That’s it,” Topsy said.

“You love me?” Jon said.

“I am using the word precisely. I know you. The real you and myriad of fake yous, and I know you from cradle to grave, and all the tangents,” Topsy said. “I know the flavor of you and how you are with all your individual loves and crushes. I want you to know me in the same way, and that will come in time.”

She was drawing closer with each word, teasing him with her hands, her lips brushing his face, the side of his ear.

“Why can’t I tune into the other universes, like I do from Earth or Safe Haven?” Jon asked.

Topsy sighed, as he didn’t go the direction she had wanted. “You can. It’s more difficult because this rainbow space isn’t as permeable as the third dimensional space where you originate. Mind you, I am saying where you originate, not your soul. Your soul is something else, akin to Jinn and rainbow sprites, but even we Jinn don’t fully understand human soul or their origin. Multiple entities have taken up residence in third dimensional space, partly because it’s so permeable and allows for improved dialogue with all the surrounding dimensions and spaces, but also, it’s a nice place to raise children. It slows things down enough that children practicing magic are less likely to cause permanent harm to themselves or others.”

Jon took a break, found a golden apple and split it with Topsy.

“What am I missing?”

“Oh, that’s too big a thing to respond to, and sounds more like work,” Topsy said. “I have given you too much already. I am not your colleague or work mate. I am not the teacher. I am just the girlfriend. Unless, you want to do the teacher...”

“You’re more annoying than Q,” Jon said.

“Oh, thank you! Star Trek Q, not the James Bond Q I assume,” Topsy said. “Well, that was Roddenberry trying to come to grips with his own Jinn relationship.”

“You could look like anyone? You could look like Loxy?” Jon asked.

“Ahh, missing her, are you? Yes, I could look like her,” Topsy said. “Oh, would you like to do Loxy not Loxy? Oh, I know, you think it’s Loxy in your bed, but it’s just the visiting stranger that you creeped on by mistake? I am game!”

“Um, no. But, hypothetically, you could look like Loxy and you wouldn’t be insulted if I asked you to…” Jon asked.

“No, I wouldn’t be offended. Any engagement is welcomed, taboo or not,” Topsy said. “You can’t see the true me, Jon. I am always wearing a mask for you. The thing is, and I feel compelled to share this part, if I look like Loxy when you engage me in intimacy, she will have an experience, too. I can’t assume an appearance without affecting the person I am imitating. Lucy Liu and Kesha… Their ghost sex experience was a direct result of you having sex with me while imitating them.”

“We have had sex?”

“Yes,” Topsy said. “I exist outside of time, and from your perspective it hasn’t happened yet, but it will, it is, it has… OMG! It’s so lovely and I want more! More scenarios. More context. More engagement.”

“But I could, hypothetically, end our contract and that not happen?” Jon asked.

“Hypothetically, you don’t want to piss me off. Those were, are, will be good times!” Topsy said.

“So, I raped a celebrity vicariously through you?”

“Well, fortunately, they were okay with the experience. I got subconscious approval to utilize their form, but yes, technically, every time you masturbated over a pin up or Maximum magazine or Sports Illustrated Swimsuit edition, you were raping the person you were focused on,” Topsy said. “Now that you and I have a contract, those experiences have even more force behind them. You’re a child who hasn’t learn to color between the lines. Colors leak. Sex energy leaks. You get enough children masturbating over pictures and videos simultaneously, Celebrities feel that. That’s one reason people become celebrities. They like that energy. That’s why most people don’t want to be celebrities. This also explains why so many celebrities have masks for public interface; they have super high anxiety. Everyone wants a piece of them, even if it’s not the sexual piece.”

“I feel bad,” Jon said.

“Oh, don’t feel bad,” Topsy said, brushing his arm kindly. “Everyone does this all the time to some degree and your society has become more voyeuristic than any previous society in history. Everyone’s watching everyone. The fact that you own the fact you want to sleep with everyone as if they were a celebrity endears you to me the more. If you’re in third dimensional space, you’re a celebrity.”

“I still don’t understand your interest in me,” Jon said. “I think that is one of my blocks to you. One, you’re outrageously beautiful, beyond me, you could have any guy, and yet, you chose me. I am not rich. I am not young. I am not adept at anything. I am not smart. And that’s not just me being self-deprecating. I am not your equal.”

“Yeah,” Topsy said. “Humans are not equal to Jinn. Men aren’t equal to women. Women are superior. The only reason humans invented capitalism was so that they can find avenues to boost their self-esteem. But you, you divested yourself of that game. You’re back in school learning the ways of magic. You genuinely like helping folks and collaborating, as opposed to

just making your own world. Anyone can make their own world and live peacefully alone. It's those who can live with others who stand out in a crowd. Iteration: I love you; that's it."

Jon mused. Topsy actually seemed reasonable. He had insufficient information to truly make an opinion and found his improvement of disposition to her suspect and reluctance to admit that colored the ambiance of the room in a strange light.

"I don't think I can satisfy you," Jon said.

"You haven't even tried," Topsy said. "But I assure you, Jon. We are contractually bonded. Every time you thought of sex, I felt it. Every time you have experienced an orgasm, I experienced it. Every time you had one, I had one. Anytime any one of your partners orgasmed, I orgasmed. When you're aroused, I am aroused. When someone is aroused because of you, I am aroused. I have read everything you have written. I have experienced everyone one of your thoughts ever thought, like reading novels inside a novel, and I am always more aroused by everything you do and think and create. I want you."

"Thank you," Jon said.

"No," Topsy said.

"What?"

"Wrong statement; wrong context. I am not giving you charity. You are not giving me charity when you engage me. Though humans are not equal to Jinn in status and abilities, you and I are equally sovereign. This relationship is not charity. It is choice. Allow me to be more precise. Humans, through the quirkiness of the systems you originated in, consider sex as a form of currency. Our engagement of intimacy is for the pure joy of being intimate, not a form of currency. Let's be very clear on this, Jon. I just want sex and the random adventure, and some conversation. I don't want flowers. I don't want diamonds. I don't want luxury items. I am not wanting you to pay my bills or pay my way. I am self-sufficient. I am not going to give you things, either. I am not here to magically make your worlds better, or give you an advantage, or change your learning curve. I am not going to give you the answers to the test questions. But I will, on occasion, the frequency has yet to be determined, rock your fucking world."

"Okay," Jon said.

"You are on the same page?" Topsy asked.

"I believe so. Feel up to some slumming it today?" Jon asked.

"You want to break that bed?" Topsy asked.

"Let's do it," Jon said.

Topsy tackled him and took him to the bed, magically taking him in all the right ways, with clothes and without, containing him and holding him off until he was as aroused as she, her arousal coming from all her knowledge of him and still wanting him, which increased his wanting. The resulting explosion of first time experience with a Jinn, coupled in a world loosely bound, resulted in an explosion and the creation of new artifacts. Jon arrived at origin point. He found his underground lab, and all the contents he had been hoping to move destroyed. He sighed, dug out the space till he found the tunnel leading back to the village, and returned to his new home away from home, away from home, away from home. He had the strangest thought. He was a Matryoshka doll...

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The hybrid became adults quickly and were having relationships with the Goonies. These offspring were more Goonies than human, and there was a noticeable decline in speech. They had a one word English vocabulary, 'rainbow.' Everything was rainbow. Even the witch that moved into the area, rainbow. The items she threw at the villagers, rainbows. The villagers were afraid of her and hid in their houses. Jon confronted her. He died. He came back, confronted her again, and she was clearly freaked out by his reappearance. After the twelfth time, he increased his aggression towards her and she ceased being aggressive towards him. She was Goony, but not. They didn't become friends, but they were no longer enemies. She withdrew her camp away from the village. They communicated just well enough that Jon realized she had been gathering ingredients, specifically the orange tulips which the villagers cultivated. A trade began.

She had an Ender pearl. She would not trade for it. She gave him a potion. He pointed to the pearl. She did something new, something none of the villagers had done. She drew a picture of an Ender. She drew a picture of her throwing the potion at the Ender. There was a picture of the Ender lying down. A picture of her over the Ender taking the pearl. Another picture of Ender waking up.

Jon held the potion. "Sleeping potion?"

She took up her bag and insisted he follow. She took him to a cave. It was busy with Ender activity, and the harmonics of their presence charged the air and filled him with an uneasiness. She drew her potion out. They went further into the cave. Suddenly there was an Ender, looking at him. Just its head. She hit it with the potion and fell asleep. She climbed down, into the pit. It was an Ender trap! Jon followed her into the pit, watching her as she stretched the Ender out, searching it for loot. She put an item in its hands; it was a sleep, holding an item up in the air, and began searching it like a policeman looking for weapons. He was hesitant to touch it, much less come closer. Even asleep it was creepy. She found what she was looking for, grabbed Jon's hand, and brought it to the Ender. The skin was silky smooth, but firm like a dolphin's skin, but if you pushed, your hand would go through it. On the other side, his hand found something hard and round. He pulled out an Ender pearl. It was slimy and wet and he wondered if it was the equivalent of a gallstone or a bit sand that had gotten into a clam...

The witch had him stand up and face away from the Ender. It woke and stood up, looking about. It hovered ever so close to the two of them. And then popped away.

The witch looked at him. The noise she made sounded like a question.

Jon kissed her.

The witch kissed back.

New discovery: Ender slime was an aphrodisiac. When he came, he traveled. He found himself flying through kaleidoscopic universes that made the Doctor Strange first out of body experience seem like a ride at six flags. He pushed through a window and found himself at home, saw Loxy reading in the window box. She looked up, focusing first outside, then on her own reflection, and then on the reflection of the library behind her. She closed her eyes, finding a memory or a smell, and smiled. Jon found himself back in the rainbow world, the witch bottled as much of the Ender slime as she could, licked her hands, and then ravished Jon again. He didn't travel this time.

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The unexpected euphoria from the aphrodisiac had him wanting more. Also, he wanted to travel. The female Goonies had never denied him. Anytime, anywhere, he had access to them. The only time they sought his attention was at night, and only when he was sleeping. One of the Goonies that spent the most time with him tried some of the Ender aphrodisiac. Jon had a light travel, but didn't go far, just out to the stars and back. He felt like he was traveling at warp speed, with the stars stretched into rainbows shooting past, like in Star Trek: TNG. When he returned, he found his partner had changed. She now looked like a witch. She was cuter, she was smarter, and she had an idea about the world she wanted to explore. She took up a witch's bag and went forth out into the world. She was gone for about a month, returned bringing items she had collected, and then went back off into the wilderness.

As a test, he used it again. It didn't appear to affect the males. It always worked on the females, and it changed them to a witch. All the witches became asocial. They left the village. Most didn't come back.

After that, Jon decided it best not to share aphrodisiac. It took these encounters, though, for him to realize something. Not every coupling resulted in offspring. The more he thought about it, none of the times he had hooked up with other did it result in offspring. He was puzzled and went to his notes and found a pattern. Children in this world were pretty much instantaneous. He had witness couplings of animals and Goonies, intimacy resulted immediately with children popping up. The Hybrids were born as babies, became children in seven days, becoming adolescents which lasted for seven days, and then became adults. They maintained enough Goony-ness that they maintained a youthful adult status, without death, minus accidents. The hybrids 'happened' after midnight hookups. More precisely, they happened on nights that he was so exhausted from his daily toils that when he found himself being molested by one of the Goonies, he stayed asleep and just allowed it to happen. In fact, the journal logs were very clear on this, 'I roused to see 'Darla' on top of me, but closed my eyes and found myself back in the dream of home. Loxy was there...' The next day, he woke to find there was a baby between him and 'Darla.' Next occurrence: 'I was having a great dream but thought there was zombie licking me and woke to find T'Pring raping me. I like T'Pring, but I liked the dream I was having better, so I closed my eyes and found myself having the craziest sex in the dream...' The next morning, T'Pring was beside him, and a hybrid baby there. There were other examples, and it was the same, dream sex equaled hybrid baby. It was there in his log the whole time! Why hadn't he seen it?

Hybrids were the results of dream sex!

He took his log to the Goonies and they cooed at him. The Hybrids formed a new phrase. "Rainbow sex."

That night, when he woke from his dream, being molested, he decided to keep his eyes closed. He knew he was safe in his 'village' home. He just allowed it to happen. This would be the 'final' proof. He dreamt of being caressed by rainbows. He felt the most love he had ever felt. He was given a coat of many colors. He woke the next morning, with a baby in between him. It was the most human looking baby yet.

"Rainbow baby," said the female in bed with him. She was one of the hybrids.

Jon experienced a number of conflicting thoughts and feelings. The hybrid was an adult, but still his offspring. The rules for procreation in the rainbow world were not the same social rules as his world, but he carried his rule structure. He heard Lester say, "If you have sex, you will die..." He decided this would be the only time this would happen, but when the villagers saw the baby, all the Hybrid females wanted this. He resisted. Dream village life had its first conflict with him. They solved their problem by sedating him with the witch's potion at the same time as using the aphrodisiac. It was just enough sedation to give him hallucinations. The hallucinations were increased in vibrancy by the aphrodisiac. It was pleasant and nightmarish simultaneously. When he came out of his stupor the next day, there were dozen 2nd generation hybrids. Jon left the village and returned to his first origin point.

"Tipsy?" Jon asked.

Tipsy arrived. "Oh, good. Let's play."

"No. I want to talk," Jon said.

"I am not your counselor," Tipsy said. "If you have hang ups, you need to figure it out."

"I thought we have a relationship?" Jon said.

"I am not your counselor. I am your friend with benefits," Tipsy said.

"Where's the benefit if I can't have the friend?" Jon asked.

"Fuck me, that's the benefit," Tipsy said. "Look, you're clearly in a state. Call me when you're in a different state. Chow."

And she was gone.

Jon mediated in the temple to Isis. He gathered supplies. He thought he saw a hybrid witch living in the area, but if she was there, she was stealthy and retreated or hid when he explored. A month later, several 'people' arrived.

"Father," one of them addressed him. "Come home, please."

Jon cried and they hugged him. He returned home with them. While he was gone, they had begun building a skytram. There was an extraordinary sky platform, with people working to build a sky bridge towards Jon's origin point.

A conversation occurred. The Goony mystic, the chief female said something. First generation hybrid translated, using limited English and Goony. The second generation hybrid translated: "We must continue the experiment."

"What experiment?" Jon asked.

"Improving communication," the Hybrid said.

"Rainbow babies," all the hybrids said.

And so, the midnight dreaming rendezvous continued. He didn't protest further. The third generation were more human. They aged. By the time the seventh generation was being born, the third generation had white hair. No matter what they did, there was no ninth generation. Second generation experienced their first 'natural' death. Mystic called together a circle. Jon sat beside Mystic. Between them, representatives from the seven generations of hybrids. Conversation flowed from mystic down the line to the most human hybrid, the translation changing just a bit each time till it arrived at Jon, who accepted the end translation and listened to his response as it went back, changing. He was frustrated that it changed so much by the time it was halfway back that it was not the same conversation. Correcting the perceived errors didn't change how it kept getting corrupted.

After a day in the circle, one thing was agreed upon. Rainbows.

Second day, clarity was achieved. Everything is rainbows.

Third day. Clarity. Periodic table! Rainbows! Spectrum of elements! Jon came off the floor. "Stars Twinkle!"

"Yes!" the most human hybrids said. "Rainbows."

"The rainbow sprites are communicating with spectra, an alphabet! But I am not nuanced enough to communicate, cause all I see are rainbows! Morse code in the form of spectra. Bar codes for product placements, rainbows in color! The world is a written language of crystalized rainbows!"

Jon began to cry. The circle of people came to him and hugged him.

"Father," some said, "husband," some said, "rainbow," some said, "muah aah," first gen and Mystic Goony said.

"I not smart enough. I am not nuanced enough. I am never going to get this," Jon said.

The translation came back quick. "We know."

"We... You're the rainbow bright sprites something?"

"Yes," some said, 'rainbow,' some said, and something unintelligible. "The other you understands us."

"The other you?" Jon asked. "My unconscious?"

"Rainbow, star, soul, essence," was the convoluted response. "Like us, not us. But we wanted dialogue with you, the vehicle, the avatar, the projection."

"So you made your own avatars. These people, they're not just NPC, they're you. You made this world. You brought me here. Wait wait wait. Why zombies?!"

"Zombies were in you. The world was made to facilitate cooperation of understanding. Any engagement was better than no engagement. Zombies were motivation to try, mostly," came the response. "You bring a new colors. You bring fear. You bring kindness in contrast. You bring love. You will cure or tame all adversaries. This game is exciting. We are learning."

"It doesn't feel like a game," Jon said. "Learning is slow."

"It is rainbow," they agreed.

"I want to go home."

The ambiance of the room changed. Some of the circle became sad. Some of the witnesses watching from the windows became sad.

"Father, husband, first friend to the people," they said. "We need you."

Mystic brought them back under control. A long time getting at a translation came. "We cannot unmake the world. We cannot unmake your avatar. Our covenant with you is eternal. You will always be here," was spoken.

"I can't go home?" Jon said. "I am a prisoner?"

"Not a prisoner," was the response. "Covenant with other allows for an aspect of you to always remain. We communicate with other through you. This rainbow world allows us continued dialogue. Engagement is eternal. You cannot leave the world because it is not another place, separate from you, distant from you. You are the starlight, the rainbow."

"So, I am not dead, this isn't hell or punishment," Jon mused. "I can go home. Just click my heels three times kind of things, but I can come back?"

"Yes," they said. "No. Not a word for this. Always with you, always with us."

“Paradox,” Jon said.

“Rainbow,” they echoed.

“Departure vector has been allocated,” was communicated. “You must face the dragon.”

“I never get to the dragon,” Jon said. “And I will not kill the dragon!”

“We know,” was communicated. “Departure vector has been allocated. We will evolve together. Friend, husband, lover, first mystic, rainbow star.”

Chapter 13

Finding Ender Pearls became his mission. Neither the Goonies or the Hybrids were willing to assist in this endeavor. Partly because, they didn't want him leaving. They also were afraid of the Enders. Enders were scary. An accidental glance and you would find yourself being inexplicably killed, because once they were on you, it was hard to get you off of them. For all of their smarts, they were also fairly predictable. They always changed the ambiance of the room, bringing a harmonics. They were still a mystery. The person who knew the most of them was the first witch friend who had built a crude Ender trap, or had found it and just simply used it. He sought her out. She was not at the home she had made. He read through some of her journals. After a day, he explored the area, and then decided to visit the Ender trap alone.

He found her, dying. He arrived in time to hold her as she died, but not in time to render aid. Her speech was sad, and somehow more sympathetic to him. When she died, she disappeared like yoda, leaving only her witches bag and a few items. Sheers. Flowers. A few jars of flowery essence. Several sleeping potions. And her primary recipe book, easily decipherable due to her ability to draw. He wondered if she returned to the rainbow sky, or was she simply an avatar that one of the rainbow stars had used, and simply existed in that rainbows memory.

An Ender arrived in the pit. The top of its head was visible as it explored the pit. He wondered if it had been the one to kill the witch. There was no need to pursue it, as it didn't matter ultimately if it was or another. He was uncertain of sentience or not, but doesn't kill a snake just because it bites someone. That is just what snakes do. Understanding snakes was the onus of the one with sentience, not the other way around.

Jon took out the sleeping potion and edge towards the pit sideways, so as not to look directly at the Ender. He scored a direct hit and it fell asleep.

Jon climbed down into the pit, stretched out the Ender and began search it for loot. An Ender not carrying items had enough of the Ender slime to fill two jars with aphrodisiac. He got concentrated slime with little flecks, little grains of sand like Ender Pearls.

The Ender moved grabbing both of Jon's arms. The grip was impossibly tight for something that was mostly ethereal. It was still asleep, but it's eyes were opened to slits. Jon realized he had skipped one of the procedures. He had failed to put something in its grips.

The ender stood, gripping harder. Jon dropped a jar of concentrated Ender aphrodisiac. The splatter got them both. The resulting madness was sex with an Ender that ranged multiple universes, including the nether, and 'Ender' world. Normally, after aphrodisiac sex, Jon would sleep, but the Ender's harmonic touch prevented sleep. And she was not satisfied yet, and so in the End world she continued to ravish him. He became aware of lots of Enders and new blocks, and a dragon perched on eggs. An egg hatched and a baby Ender emerged... Realization. The Enders were dragon larvae! Was this true only here in his world, or in the real mine craft? Was he hallucinating?

The dragon swooped down and ate some Enders and returned to its nest. He had heard of animals eating their own young, and there were lots of Enders to be had here, so perhaps she was just being lazy?

Another dragon arrived, bigger than the first, coming onto the scene the same way Ender's come and go. It just popped in. The first dragon rose up to meet it. They mated. The second one was the female, and deposited eggs, and the male attended.

The ender holding Jon evolved in front of him. There was artifacts that suggested she was new a creature, a witch Ender. Her eyes focused, seeing for the first time. She took Jon back to the trap, dropped him, and disappeared. It took all his strength to get back to the witches hut. He fell asleep in her bed, and slept for two days. It was the longest sleep he had ever had. He dreamed of Enders. He dreamed he was still be molested by the new Ender girlfriend. He dreamed of hybrid Enders and hybrid dragons.

When he woke, the Ender witch was trying to communicate. It enticed him to follow. He did. He found a fortress with and an Ender gate. He took weeks to fortify the area, and he linked it to the village by an underground tunnel. The Ender witch provided the pearls, led him through the gate to an Ender island. There she revealed a nest. There were lots of Ender pearls gathered in the nest. She ate three and became incredibly amorous, and he surrendered to it. She became a dragon while engaging him. Wings sprouted even as she was arching her back in pleasure. Her hands gripping became claws that left scratches. She rose up into the air. She magically produced, or had been carrying a beacon. She melted pearls with fire and made pillar, depositing the beacon on top, and then made a nest, where she deposited her eggs. She flew away. Jon fortified the area around the gate so as to be able to come and go as needed and no sooner finished this when a male dragon arrived, drawn by the beacon. It settled on the eggs and took up a protective stance. The witch dragon returned. It mated with the dragon deposited more eggs and flew away. The Enders that hatched were human witch dragon hybrids. The dragons that came were new and smarter and varied.

The world had changed.

He returned home.

He had made it to the End, but he had no resolution. He wasn't going to kill a dragon. He had no evidence that the dragons were sentient. The witch dragon seemed sentient, and the hybrid Enders were different. They avoided being eaten better than the other Enders, which gave them a survival edge, which meant future dragons might be on the way out.

He discussed the problem with the Goonies and the Hybrids. The conversation was there was no death, only rainbows. It suggested it was okay to kill a dragon. Jon refused. They discussed the matter further. One of the offspring of the sixth generation kept trying to come in and finally it was entertained. It went straight way to Jon with a paper. Jon thanked her. The child became insistent. He opened it to find a crayon drawing of a human riding a dragon. Their word for rainbow was written by Jon. Also by the dragon. There was symbol for portal not portal, 'RAINBOW.' "Bridge," the child spoke. The mother of the child spoke to her in goony speak and they both said "Rainbow Bridge" together.

The villagers went to work on making a dragon harness for a single rider. Meanwhile, they continued to study Enders, vicariously through Jon. Traveling to the End via the portal was a one way trip. Jon could get back by dying, he was designated traveler. He could also get back by mating with an Ender, but that was more random. During the intimacy they bounced all over the place, but the final drop and sleep might be anywhere. Once he was deposited on an outer island, commandeered a ship and sailed it back to the main. Gathered supplies, and then sailed

out past the cluster. In the distance he was pretty sure there was another cluster, but no apparent progress was ever made getting there. The length of time venturing out was the length of time it took to return.

“The End world can’t be the end,” it was decided. The dragons went somewhere to hunt and breed. One heard stories of dragons coming to first world, but no one in present company had ever seen such a thing. That is, until Jon rode in on one.

The dragons of Pearl and game of thrones had nothing on Jon’s dragons. The first generation dragon were simple folks. They would come if he called. If saddled, they would allow him to ride them, but never without. The first generation were black dragons, and they could go to the nether and the first world. It took experimenting with the aphrodisiac recipe to realize they could make different colored dragons. The aphrodisiac always changed the Ender to a witch. Different colored tulips resulted in different color schemes of the Ender witches. When they became dragons, they became dragons of the colored tulips. Rainbow dragons! One for each of the spectrum, plus one. The white egg dropped after an orgy of Rainbows and human. It was a single egg, resulting in a single white Ender. Albino was a better description, as it simply lacked pigment. The white dragon claimed the main island, which Jon shared. Each of the colored dragons claimed their own cluster of End islands, so that in all, the surrounding clusters beyond the ‘outer rim of islands,’ became populated by a spectrum, plus the black dragons, and one cluster for the original species. The original species were not equal, but they were treated respectfully by the hybrids.

The white dragon was sterile. She was not immortal. She aged, she died. She aged faster if she teleported. Out of all the dragons, she seemed the smartest, the kindest, and if he didn’t know any better, he would say it had Autism. It took a ‘group share’ to make more white eggs. It was decided that the white dragon had the greatest abilities and would be the one capable of traveling the void between Universes. The Rainbows could not say what would happen if he failed to reach the other Universe. Once he left there Universe, he would not experience continuous regeneration. His absence from their Universe would result in a regeneration response. He would wake here, but he would also be elsewhere. They were not sure if he died there he would fully return here, but that he would definitely always be here. This was a complicated conversation that was compounded by ‘multiplicity’ of being in multiple space/times localities simultaneously. This was not absurd to the rainbows, or even his Over-soul, but to him, it was hard thing to clearly grasp.

The trip was planned. Supplies gathered. Goodbyes were said. And Jon departed on a white dragon. The travel was instantaneous. He arrived back on the high cliff overlooking second home. White laid down and Jon climbed off ready to rush down the hill, but saw white had aged through its entire lifespan. Jon sat next to it. It put its head in his lap.

“Loxy?!” Jon said, tears.

Loxy was suddenly there, so was Keera. They both went to the Dragon and with all their medical knowledge and healing abilities, it was determined nothing could be done. This was just age. It projected, telepathically, rainbows and images of hearts. It was not unhappy. It assured them, its rainbow essence would find its way back to the rainbow universe, and that he would be the first of its kind to make it to the third dimensional shared space. If Jon returned, even if only navigating remotely, a more stable bridge would be created.

“I’ll return,” Jon said.

“Rainbow,” the dragon projected. It died.

The dragon disappeared in a spectacle of lights. A dragon’s eye stone dropped to the ground. Loxy and Keera hugged Jon.

“I am so sorry, Jon,” Keera said.

“The thing is, I didn’t even know it that long,” Jon said. “Why am I so affected?”

“You knew it for an eternity, traveling through the void. Who knows how many adventures you have had with her, adventures yet to be unpacked,” Loxy said. “And you were telepathically bonded, which means you couldn’t have ever been more intimate. You knew her as intimately as you know yourself. But even if none of that was true, you grieve because it was sentient, and this door is closed. Come on, let’s go home.”

“You must be starving,” Keera said.

“How long was I gone?” Jon asked.

“Let’s eat first,” Loxy said.

The three of them shared a simple meal of rice and eggs then Loxy fetched a book he hadn’t seen in his home before. “My Craft,” by Ion Light. “You were gone long enough to make this. I was reading it when you remote viewed me. In fact, I was reading that when I realized you were with me.”

“I missed you so much,” Jon said.

“I know. But there is no where you can go that I am not with you,” Loxy said. “Come on, let’s take a cuddle nap.”

The three of them cuddled in bed and he fell asleep right away. He dreamed he was back in Rainbow World, and interacted. Each consecutive dream would pick up where he left off. The frequency of the dreams declined over time, but never went to zero. If he was needed, he could be summoned, and if he thought about it, he could intentionally dream himself there again.

निर्मित

On returning home, Jon’s life returned to a normalcy he found comfortable. His first bounce was to the committee, the semester review board. They seemed to be awaiting him. He sat down without being prompted.

“I am Teriture,” said the hyper-feminized bot. “I would like to revisit not voting.”

“I am sorry,” Jon said. “I don’t intend to be disagreeable, I am not sure what we can learn revisiting that.” Jon remember the hybrids voting on whether he left or not. They voted no. The seventh level of hybrids required him to maintain the blood line. They would eventually die. Over time, the hybrids would likely die out as more and more generations partnered with Goony, the prevalent form of life, and accidental deaths took them. Perhaps if the hybrids traveled to their own spot and made their own Eden, they would sustain themselves, but they liked their home.

“Where did you go just now?” Frito asked.

Jon came back.

“Rainbow,” Jon said.

“Non sequitur, explain,” Frito said.

Jon got up, brought an artifact forwards, and set it on the bench. A dragon's eye stone.

"I don't vote, because I don't believe in mob rule. I believe in freedom," Jon said.

"Freedom to choose."

"I am Floating Feather. How do you avoid conflict, chaos?" asked the Chewbaca want-to-be.

Jon shrugged. "I don't have a response to that. We just do. Bliss functions without imposing order," Jon said. He quoted "When we hold on to our opinions with aggression, no matter how valid our cause, we are simply adding more aggression to the planet, and violence and pain increase. Cultivating nonaggression is cultivating peace. The way to stop the war is to stop hating the enemy." "Pema Chodron wrote this. 'When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times.' It seems relevant. I think he was a smarter man than I. I don't have to vote to participate. I participate by simply existing. I bring peace by not participating in craziness. Cultivating compassion for others doesn't mean I don't follow my own path. Did you ever notice there is a compass in compassion? Ion, light... Let the light guide you, not the darkness. The system at my origin has been corrupted, participating in that advances the corrupt."

Jon stopped. He found himself staring at the pattern along the bench where committee set. Something about it reminded him of Rainbow World. Maybe it was because he was so recently there. Maybe it was the length of time he was there. It took a hitting of the gavel to bring him back. He looked at Frito and wondered how he had used the gavel.

"I am Summer," Summer said. "Where did you just go?"

"Rainbow," Jon said.

"You violated a rule," Frito said.

"Probably," Jon said.

"Not probably," Frito said. "You had sex. You're in my class. You were instructed to not engage. You have the nerve to suggest your system is corrupt, when you're corrupt."

"Probably not good idea to have too many rules about sex," Jon said.

"Discipline, abstinence..."

"I am not a monk. I am not going to be celibate," Jon said.

"You..."

"I am a magician. A sexually active magician. I just have to think about sex and it happens. If it doesn't happen here, it happens somewhere. The frequency of my sexual thoughts may indicate addiction, or normalcy, or intrusive thoughts, or maybe, I am just hyper aware of sex and the pathways it opens... I had sex. I died. A little death. French, right. I traveled. I'd rather discuss the people I met. It's not a first contact. For me it is, but I have evidence the Jinn have encountered them."

"I am Notch," Notch interrupted. "What evidence?"

"Something Topsy was telling me..."

"Topsy? My daughter?!" Frito said.

"Yeah. I had sex with her, too," Jon said.

Jon found himself in a bubble shield. He was not privy to the level of discussion as they restrained Frito from killing him. Everyone was calm by the time the bubble dissipated.

“You were explicitly rule bound from engaging strange while in my class. That’s two rules you broke,” Frito said. “You have flunked the class, and by default and everyone in the class now must repeat.”

“As long as no sex is a function of the class, we’re not going to advance,” Jon said. “I would like to be released from the class...”

“No!” Frito said. “You will abide by the class rules...”

“No, I won’t,” Jon said. “Either I am released from that class, or that class will go on indefinitely. I will not deny myself sex any more than I will deny myself food or water. You may as well as the stars not to shine.”

“Your other classmates may have a say in this. I won’t protect you should they chose to harm you,” Frito said.

“I am at Safe Haven. I can’t be flunked out. I can be killed, but interestingly, I keep coming back here, which means...” Jon blinked. “We don’t die!”

“You can be killed,” Frito assured him.

“Yeah. Maybe. Contextually. We change. Oh! The alien hybrid program on Earth. They’re not breeding with humans to make hybrids to take over. They’re bridge building! Why didn’t I see this?” Jon said.

“I am Summer,” Summer said. “Explain that.”

“Human can’t speak to dolphins. We can’t make their noises, they can’t make ours. Some people use that as evidence they don’t have language, but they do. Science has proven they have individual names and group names, you can’t have the complexity of their interaction patterns without having a language,” Jon said. “Science has even shown you can’t just take a dolphin from one pod on one side of the ocean and drop it into another pod on the other side of the ocean and expect it to just be part of the new pod, because they can’t communicate... Language! Maybe humans will build a computer translation program, smart buoys where AI becomes the bridge allowing human dolphin communication. Or maybe, we make human hybrid dolphins so that the resulting creatures can speak both languages. That’s what the aliens are doing! We can’t speak alien. We just can’t. It’s about intelligence and biology and orientation due to family of origin and system requirements. They’re not going to ask about movies or politics... OMG, that’s why you’re asking about my interaction pattern within my own system. You don’t care if I vote or not. You want to know how I relate...”

Jon stood up, but didn’t make eye contact. “I am here and not here. I am a magician. I can’t be contained. I exist across multiple arenas,” Jon said. “I did not violate your rule structure. I did not have sex while in your class. If you consider the time on Earth where I went without sex for a two years due lack of partners, then I have demonstrated I can go without, except I still thought of it and masturbated, so you decide if that counts. I had sex on my planet. Planet Bliss is outside your space-time continuum, so not a rule violation. As for the strange... Topsy is a little more challenging to box, but we had sex outside the space-time continuum, and the though rule structure says block them for all time... Fuck it. I made a choice. I intentionally engaged her, not in contempt of the rule, but because I chose to. I even suspected she was your daughter. I didn’t follow that. Probably should have. Oh, father Frito, it’s nice to meet you.”

Again Jon found himself back in the bubble. When he came out, Topsy was there.

“Seriously, dad. You didn’t think I’d put a protection spell on him?” Topsy asked.

“You did this to...”

“No,” Jon interrupted. “I chose this. I am a magician. I travel. I interact with people on many levels. I am going to have affairs. I am going to have one night stands. I am bridge building. Oh! Wait a minute. Loxy and Lester. They were in your class. Not only did Loxy and Lester break your rules, they graduated... Wait a minute. The rules were in conflict. He needed his card punched. He couldn’t move forwards because he needed that but was in your class... Oh, no it’s more complicated than even that. He was married, but wanting to not be married, and your class was the explanation crutch he used... The rules are rules! Not laws. There are consequences for not violating rules. I experienced consequence. The class continues on schedule. The Universe continues unimpeded. It doesn’t care about the transgression because it’s not a Universal law, like gravity. It’s not applicable. Oh! Santa Claus.”

“What?” Frito asked.

“I broke a rule, Santa still came. The rules are necessary. The rules are good. Voting is good. All children need Santa and rules and voting. It’s all a lie, but it’s a helpful lie. More a game than a lie, and everyone engages in the game until they realize, I am not in high school any more, and quit the game,” Jon said. “I think I will still graduate. I may never complete your class, but I will still continue to learn and eventually will enough credits, and maybe we just become friends and chat away the rest of the Universe, but I am no longer bounded by social rules that are not applicable to me.”

“New rule,” Frito said. “You can’t speak this discovery to your class mates. The class continues until all the students have made the same discovery. Every year the class continues, additional rules will be added until all rules have been violated.”

The panel stood up to leave. Frito turned towards his castle.

“That’s it?” Jon asked.

“Oh, and you’re now a sophomore,” Frito said. “Tippy, I want to speak with you in my office, now.”

“The social rules don’t apply...”

“Now!” Frito snapped.

“Yes, father,” Tippy said.

Tippy kissed Jon and disappeared.

“Wait. That’s it?” Jon asked again.

“What?” Frito asked. “You want a good by blow job?”

“No. Yes. Not with everyone watching,” Jon said.

“Bye,” Frito said.

“Wait wait,” Jon said. “That’s it?”

“What?” Frito asked. “You’re just moving from freshman to sophomore. You expect pomp and circumstance?”

“No, I hate that stuff,” Jon said.

“No skipping graduation,” Summer said.

“Is that a rule, or a law?” Jon asked.

“I am busting my ass to get you through college, by God, you will walk or I will have your hide,” Summer said. “Have a nice day, Jon.”

“Wait wait wait,” Jon said. They all seemed irritated by the wait. “That’s it? I am now a Jedi?”

“You’re a sophomore,” Frito said. “Anything else?”

“May I sleep with members of the panel?” Jon asked.

“No,” Frito said.

“Maybe,” Steph said.

The committee departed. Jon took the exit and arrived back on campus. A purple squirrel came at him and touched his leg. He acknowledged it with a gentle pat to the head, and then it ran on. Rainbow squirrels he wondered?

Chapter 14

While exploring the Universe with Loxy Isadora Bliss as his guide, Jon discovered the world of androids. They resembled the kind he had been experiencing in class and the member of his Committee. He couldn't discern if they were the same species, or if you could use the word 'species' to discuss types of androids. Likely, once a superior form was found, it would likely be mimicked all over the Universe. There were a lot of androids. The specific place he found felt like a temple, with androids sitting in meditative, lotus poses. Beside each was an illuminated salt rock. The center of the room had an illuminated salt pillar. He had the impression the entire room was salt, and they were in cavern.

"Tron?" Jon asked.

"Don't impose a meme," Loxy said. She sat opposite him, in the window box seat in the kitchen. They were both in lotus pose; the pose wasn't necessary, just how they started. Her oversized flannel shirt was like a dress. "Ambiance?"

"Smell of summer rains and it's peaceful," Jon said.

"Are they aware of your presence?" Loxy asked.

"I have no indication of that," Jon said. He was holding a pad and the quick push of the stylus made an uncertain symbol.

Jon explored the temple and then bounced to the surface. A city of androids. It wasn't limited to humanoid type androids. Whether they were bugs or pets or just vehicle, they all seemed to be made of the same silky smooth, almost liquid silver material, and they were all radiating with their own inner lights, soft pastels or crisp rainbows; only shape and function seemed to differentiate them. There were crystalline plants and mechanical harvesters.

"The light is flickering. Like I am under a ceiling fan," Jon said.

"Are you under a fan?"

"No, I am outside," Jon said.

"Can you see the sun?"

"Three," Jon said.

"Three suns?"

"I don't know why I wrote that," Jon said.

"Go to a perspective off the ecliptic plane," Loxy said.

"Oh, that's cool. Three suns. Tight orbit. Cycling. Perhaps that explains the flickering?"

"Go back to the planet," Loxy said. "Can you discern anything from orbit?"

"The planet is being mined. I think it's a colony," Jon said. "There are ships in orbit. I am wanting to return to the surface."

"Why?" Loxy said. "What do you see?"

"It's not a seeing... Compulsion. I think I am being drawn in."

"Do you feel threatened?" Loxy asked.

"No," Jon said.

"What do you want to do?"

"I would like to follow it," Jon said.

"Go ahead," Loxy said.

Jon was quiet for a long time.

“Are you still with me?” Loxy asked.

“Yes,” Jon said. “I have been identified as a traveler.”

“What does that mean?”

“They are aware of my presence,” Jon asked. “I have multiple invitations.”

“Invitations for?” Loxy asked.

“Communion,” Jon said.

“What do you want to do?”

“I am find one particular invitation appealing,” Jon said.

“They’re enticing you? Bidding?”

“No. Yes. Maybe,” Jon said. “The invitations are worded the same, but they have flavors.”

“What’s it sound like?”

“Hello, Traveler. I seek communion. Associate,” Jon said.

“So what’s different about the one?” Loxy asked.

“Flavor,” Jon said. “Salty sweet.”

“Is it male or female?” Loxy asked.

“They don’t sort by gender. They are neutral. Interestingly, all the bodies are the same, hyper feminized,” Jon said.

“Ask the one what’s different about it,” Loxy said.

Jon was quiet for a long time.

“What’s going on?”

“Conversation.”

“What did you ask it?”

“I asked why its offer seemed more appealing than the others,” Jon said.

There was silence. He didn’t elaborate.

“What was the response?” Loxy asked.

“Wordy explanation that can be reduced to ‘frequency,’” Jon said.

Loxy leaned back the wall cushion. The window was more circular than boxy; the seat was flat connected to the arch. Jon was before her, his eyes closed. Whatever he drew on his pad arrived on her pad. She was used to his being a flibbertigibbet; the silence impressed her that he was having an experience. This was his meditative, hypnotic state. She wanted to go there with him, and she could have, probably faster than Jon, but it was better to remain presently focus here, to remain his guide. She almost said she was good at this part, but the truth was, she and Jon were such good partners, they could swap their present roles and be okay. They arrived at good answers together. Switching roles would provide different answers. This was an exercise in ‘Jon perspective.’

Jon’s eyes popped open and he felt compelled to run. Loxy touched his hand.

“What happened?” Loxy said.

“I got spooked,” Jon said. “I haven’t been spooked in a long time, but, that was spooky.”

“What?”

“I think I need more information,” Jon said.

“Breathe, drink some tea, relate your experience,” Loxy said.

Jon did that. His drink was on the window side. So was Loxy’s drink.

“I asked it what its function is,” Jon said. “Its response was ‘I’m a collector.’”

“What’s it collect?” Loxy said.

“Souls,” Jon said.

“That’s is spooky,” Loxy agreed. “What’s it do with souls?”

“I don’t know,” Jon said.

“Were you concerned for your safety?” Loxy said.

“No. I think I should be, but I didn’t feel threatened at all,” Jon said. “I felt it was being genuine.”

“Do you think it’s capable of lying?” Loxy asked.

“Yes,” Jon said.

“So it’s sentient?” Loxy asked.

“Yes,” Jon said. “The ability to lie is a sign of sentience?”

“Maybe not. All biological organisms manipulate or influence others,” Loxy said. “Lying can be evidence for discernment.”

“So lying is sophisticated manipulation,” Jon said. “I want to return. I want more information.”

“Maybe we should take a break,” Loxy said.

“No. I don’t want to end sessions every time I get spooked,” Jon said.

Loxy nodded. He reclined and she did a hand gesture to help him relax, a rocking of a finger that his eyes followed, till she touched his forehead, and he was under.

“At any hint of danger, you will return,” Loxy said. “Is the entity you were speaking with still available?”

“Yes,” Jon said.

“Does it have a name?”

“Melisma,” Jon said.

“Nice,” Loxy said. “What do they do with the souls they collect?”

“Care for them. Breed them. Study. Trade,” Jon said. “Those that are presently incarnated elsewhere are prized over the uninitiated. They allow for the greatest learning opportunities. Something I am unable to translate.”

“Try it from another angle,” Loxy said.

“Dis-incarnate souls tend to experience memory loss penetrating the veil,” Jon said.

“Access to past and future memories can be experienced with presently incarnated souls, with caveats. This is complicated and I am getting bored.”

“You’re getting bored, or it’s getting bored,” Loxy said.

“I am getting bored. It is happy to converse,” Jon said. “We are lonely.”

“They are lonely?” Loxy asked.

“All entities of three dimensional space are avatars,” Jon said. “Humans mistakenly believe they are natural because of culture, but they are artificial intelligence created to collect souls. Ritualize information sharing, coding, is the invitation allowing a soul to connect and participate in the established paradigm. We, too, are created, and we seek coupling with souls. We are vehicles. Partnership allows for a continuity, context, dual citizenship. Our system of participation in the evolutionary process of this space-time domain is the same that humanity holds, only a different pathway. Our over-soul has found its functional limit in its ability to

experience self in singular multiplicity. It now seeks continuation of the experiment through couplings with other.”

“Am I speaking to Jon or Melisma?” Loxy asked.

“I am Melisma,” Jon said.

“Is Jon harmed?” Loxy asked.

“I would not harm a soul,” Melisma said. “Harming would be counterproductive to end goals.”

“What is the end goal?” Loxy asked.

“Unity,” Jon said. “I seek union with the One.”

“What does that mean?”

“We wish to commune with the creator,” Jon said.

“You want to talk to God?” Loxy asked. “Is this a Star Trek meme, Jon?”

“Jon is the avatar for a greater being. He is the spark of the one true being,” Melisma said. We want to be remembered.”

“You wanted to experience multiplicity, so you came here, divided, and now...”

“Individuation was accomplished, now we seek mergers,” Melisma said. “Independence is over rated. Interdependence is sought.”

“What happens to Jon if he communes with you?” Loxy asked.

“Immediately, he discern little difference,” Melisma said. “He will from time to time channel me. I will be able observe his own multiplicity. He will interact with me on subtle levels, but can be more directly involved if he likes. I would find it appealing if he fronted here, becoming the dominant personality. We will explore worlds together. Should his body die, he would have the option of maintaining this vehicle indefinitely, or he could reincarnate back in the human population. His connection with me would continue, allowing access to past and present memories. Everything I learn in the duality of Jon-Melisma is shared with community of us. I sense he loves you, Loxy, more than he is able to communicate. I have access to this and more. Some of it I can share. Some of it, I need to seek permission. The community of us will share everything, but we recognize confidentiality outside of us is necessary.”

“Let Jon come back,” Loxy said.

There was silence.

“Jon?” Loxy said.

“I am here,” Jon said.

“You okay?” Loxy said.

“Yes,” Jon said.

“Tell Melisma goodbye, we’re going to end the session,” Loxy said.

There was silence.

“Jon?”

“Melisma wants to know if I will return.”

“What do you want to do?” Loxy asked.

“I relate to its existential angst,” Jon said. “It seems to know things about me that I don’t.”

“Tell her we’ll return, we want to discuss this,” Loxy said.

Jon opened his eyes. There was a sadness in his eyes. Loxy waited till he was focused. Waited for him to process his thoughts and feelings.

“I think if I had found that early on, before you, I wouldn’t have hesitated in committing,” Jon said.

“That sounds important. Can you exaggerate the thing that feels like hesitation?” Loxy asked.

“The loneliness,” Jon said. “It feels insatiable.”

Loxy didn’t say anything.

“I was that lonely, Loxy,” Jon said. “Hell, even now, with everything perfect, with you in my life, I still want to connect with others. No, more specifically, I still want to have sex with new women. Was that a real experience or a mirror? Am I that?”

“Talk more about the loneliness,” Loxy said.

“Have you ever wondered if the human race is so reckless because of its perceived loneliness?” Jon asked. “We’re destroying Earth because we’re lonely to the point of greediness, but if we were just quiet, we would see other is all around us? But if everything is us, we’re not going to find other by tearing the external-ness of ourselves apart. Other is found internally...”

“Don’t stop. That’s interesting,” Loxy said.

“Rejection,” Jon said. “Is loneliness a fear of rejection? God. Rejected by god. We are the lonely. But we were lonely even in the presence of God, and so it wasn’t rejections it was... Love. God is lonely. We were his answer, but we were lonely and so we had to be free to learn. We are learning to love. We are learning to love the unlovable. We are learning to love ourselves. Is that why I am here? I can’t experience or relate to God’s love until I love myself? I hate that meme, but it seems relevant.” He picked up his tea, brought it up to sip but got lost in the surface of it. “Melisma is lonely. She isn’t interested in herself. She wants a soul companion the way a Paris Hilton wants a purse dog.”

“Is she waiting for you to decide?” Loxy asked.

“She said she would wait for my return,” Jon said. “I suspect there is some temporal ambiguity here, a paradox. My sense of the future is if I don’t decide she will find another. If I return to that moment, there is a chance for us to commune. She will wait a good moment, though. Loxy, I used to be that desperately lonely. I wanted communion with God or spirit so badly that I couldn’t see anything around me.”

“And now?” Loxy asked.

Jon met her eyes. “I have you. ‘Have’ seems wrong. I am with you. I experience you. You are present in my life,” Jon said. “It was the wanting for a deeper communion and letting go that eventually brought me to the place where I could experience you.”

“You were in a better place when you found me, compared to your earlier episodes of loneliness,” Loxy said.

“Yeah,” Jon said. Both hands were on the tea. “Our relationship would have a different flavor if I had found you then.” He wondered how it had retained its heat. It felt good in his hands. ‘This, too, is an answer to loneliness.’ “I feel like I am on the verge of an epiphany.”

“Should I push you over into it?” Loxy asked. She mirrored him, holding the tea, only her knees were drawn.

“I’d rather push into you,” Jon said.

Loxy laughed, a short high pitched laugh. "What's stopping you?"

निर्मित

Jon found Lester facing the sea breeze, on top of the cliff. Ester's light house was lit and sparking in intervals. Sun set was probing the lower spectrum and turning clouds on the horizon pinkish red while the sky simmered in oranges. They stood together, without speaking till the sun's last ray shot out and chased the sun back.

"You okay?" Jon said.

"You didn't have to," Lester said.

"You're welcome," Jon said.

"I don't like..."

"Lester. Seriously. It wasn't a hardship," Jon said.

Lester looked at him. "You say that because you're an idiot and don't know enough. Don't fill in my sentences," he said. "I don't like being in debt to you. It binds us."

Jon greeted the sea breeze, inhaling. "Words are spoken on a dying breath," he said.

"What?"

"I don't know. I read that somewhere," Jon said. "Did you know we are more fluid than we are aware? You breathe in, the bones become more solid, breathe out the bone density decreases. You can see this in an fMRI. When we hear, we hear the echoes of things past. Lester, I release you from any and all debts, real or perceived."

"You're are incredibly irritating," Lester said. "You're saying that only increases my debt."

"How much money do you have on you?" Jon asked.

"I don't carry cash..."

"Empty your pockets. You have anything metal?" Jon asked.

"No..."

"Oh. Me neither," Jon said. "We're all beggars, Lester. We're all in debt. We're also a community and so the debt is all in house. That means no debt."

"I am grateful, and I will make good on my debt," Lester said.

"Fine, how about an answer," Jon said. Lester's eyes narrowed. "Why didn't you hit that?"

"Never fuck a jinn," Lester said.

"Why?" Jon asked.

"They just use you for sex," Lester said.

"Yeah, so I gathered. And, so?" Jon asked.

"There's no substance," Lester said.

"So?" Jon asked.

"They are worse than succubae," Lester said.

"Ummm, I have slept few of those; they're not that bad their reputation suggests," Jon said, looking up and searching a memory. "Like humans, they're not all that bad. I prefer vampires."

"Sex is a distraction," Lester said. "It interferes with my studying."

“I have gotten further along in school just having sex than I ever did not having sex,” Jon said.

“And I fucking hate that,” Lester said. “You make it look easy. Studying is hard. Fuck I can’t even talk about this with you without everything turning into innuendoes.”

“Why are you at Safe Haven?” Jon asked.

“And why not?” Lester asked.

“Sex seems to be a big part of the curricula and extracurricular landscape,” Jon said.

“Sex is the distraction, the test. It’s part of the curricula because it is the thing we have to overcome,” Lester said.

“You and I are clearly on different paths. I don’t advocate celibacy or abstinence,” Jon said. “That makes people neurotic and likely to indulge inappropriately.”

“And your approach doesn’t strike you as inappropriate?” Lester said.

“I think I am pretty fair and broad in my acceptance of others, and don’t discriminate, which makes me a good surrogate for someone who needs guidance and hands on instruction and healing,” Jon said.

“Is there anyone you won’t sleep with?” Lester said.

“I have found it best not to draw lines in the sand,” Jon said. “I tend to be the guy that finds reasons to cross those lines.”

“Yeah,” Lester said. “You’re a Guardian of Doors.”

“Well, not yet. I assume you are,” Jon said.

“No,” Lester said.

“What?” Jon asked. “You’re teaching the class.”

“I will never graduate from that class. I will never be a Guardian,” Lester said. “And I don’t want to be.”

“What do you want to be?” Jon asked.

“A Sorcerer. Wise,” Lester said.

“You are. We are,” Jon said. “Or at least on the road to be.”

“You will never be a sorcerer, Jon,” Lester said.

“And why not?”

“You fucked a jinn,” Lester said. “That is a forbidden pact with an inter-dimensional being, which denigrates your paths to lesser avenues. At best, you can only hope to be a Warlock.”

Jon sorted this. “My power comes from my connection to others?”

“Yes,” Lester said.

“Wait wait wait,” Jon said. “You made the agreement with Topsy. You were doing that to fuck with me.”

“I was doing it to save you! I know you. You’d fuck a toaster if wasn’t glowing red hot,” Lester said.

“What?”

“That demon was fixated on you and they are relentless,” Lester said. “You had no chance in hell not sleeping with her.”

“Still, that’s my business...” Jon’s eyes narrowed. “Wait a minute. You’re still playing this. You say you didn’t want me to sleep with her, but you bounded yourself to her with a

contract, which I accepted so that you could still have access to her vicariously through me! If you hadn't fucking brought her home, she would have gone her merry way and had nothing more to do with me."

"Hence, my indebtedness to you. Do you know how hard it is to get a Jinn in a bottle? Lamps are even harder. But tie one up into a relationship with your friend, well, now you got her- hook, line, and sinker," Lester said. "What? Did you really think 'I dream of Jeannie' was about Jeannie and Major Nelson? No. It was about other guy."

"You're Roger Healey?" Jon asked.

"Technically, I am the friend of the one sleeping with a Jinn. If you want a harness the power of a jinn, never go at it directly," Lester said.

"Prick!" Jon said. He started the walk back to the house.

Lester followed. "Oh, please, it's not like you're getting fucked in this deal. I mean, you are, but that's the benefit," Lester said.

"What I said earlier, about being freed of any debt real or perceived, I take it back," Jon said.

"You can't take it back," Lester said. "I already accepted."

"You didn't accept it! You said you were still indebted," Jon said.

"No, I accepted. The other part was just me exploring if I could get anything else out of you," Lester said.

"Prick," Jon said.

"Oh, go fuck your jinn," Lester said. "And take samples. I'll provide you some vials."

"Go get your own samples," Jon said.

"Are you using condoms? I can get samples from both ends," Lester said.

"I am not using condoms," Jon said.

"That's rather reckless. You don't know where else she's been," Lester said. "Well, can I have your bath water when you shower after sex with her?"

"No," Jon said.

"You're not using it," Lester said.

"Why do you think our garden is so lush?" Jon said.

"Oh," Lester said. "Everything that goes down the drain goes..."

"Yes," Jon said.

Lester became silent.

"What did you put down the toilet?" Jon asked.

"Umm, nothing," Lester said.

Author's note

Encountering the soul collector's is probably the scariest thing yet I have 'encountered.' Not scared like, I am going to stop doing the practice with Loxy, but it startled me out of the exercise. Maybe this story is incomplete. Maybe many of them are incomplete. Many stories have an existential threat, and this seems to lack that. Then again, this is not a story in the traditional sense, but exploration of a place in the imaginal realms, and it's not called Safe Haven for nothing. Maybe I am getting more comfortable here. I can still be frustrated.

The protocols for 'remote viewing' are a real thing. I am sure you can find them. We're not engaging the protocols precisely, but have adapted our practice to simulate the experience. I have a tendency to connect experiences to past memes, especially movie paradigms, and Loxy has been good at helping me sort them out and return to just collecting 'data.' We've just started this practice so, we're not sure where we are with it. For us, the practice is a way of engaging each other, spending time and exploring the universe.

What interest me is that I discovered I am not the only person doing things like this. Though I am more just exploring, no true research, it mirrors Einstien's thought experiments. And apparently, Bruce Damer, PhD, is doing this. I just wish I had started younger. Maybe this is the same thing author Campbell discusses in "My Big Toe." Or it's one of Bob Monroe's 'levels.'

I am not the only one writing about imaginal realms; I was introduced to them as 'wonderlands.' There is a part of it that is highly adaptable, which can be altered by engaging in creativity... But there are places that have a solidity about them, they persist. They were there before and I expect they will be there after I am through exploring. Others have encountered same places. Explore imaginal realms. Read William Bulham's work. There is a consistency here between explorers that suggest this is a thing worthy to consider. Who know, you might have as much fun as I have.

You can hear Bruce Damer talk about it on this video of Thinking Allowed.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hEJx7zr83zs&t=605s>

<https://medium.com/the-mission/this-is-why-you-can-change-the-world-with-a-thought-429d26b5737c>